# THE ADVENT

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*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*

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# *The Advent*

There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts
That wait their hour to step into life's front:
We feel an aid from deep indwelling gods;
One speaks within, Light comes to us from above.
Our soul from its mysterious chamber acts;
Its influence presses upon our heart and mind
To seek for Good and Beauty and for God.

"Savitri"—The Book of Yoga—Canto 2

# The ADVENT

APRIL 1954

## CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| EDITORIALS: | —*Nolini Kanta Gupta* | |
| REALISATION, PAST AND FUTURE | | ... 5 |
| DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS | | ... 8 |
| ILION (A Fragment) | —*Sri Aurobindo* | ... 13 |
| HYMN TO INDRA | —*Sri Aurobindo* | ... 15 |
| PURNA YOGA | —*Sri Aurobindo* | ... 16 |
| THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE | —*Sri Aurobindo* | ... 24 |
| SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO PHILOSOPHY | —*A. B. Purani* | ... 34 |
| THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE | —*Rishabhchand* | ... 39 |
| THE LIFE DIVINE: (A Synopsis) | —*Nathaniel Pearson* | ... 45 |
| THE HUMAN CYCLE (An abridgement) | —*Sisir Kumar Ghosh* | ... 51 |
| REVIEW: | | |
| THE BHAGAVADGITA AND THE CHANGING WORLD | —*A. B.* | ... 55 |

There is always a great difference between what people are and do and what they ought to be and do. The Consciousness is quite aware of this and is constantly working to rectify and to change but it does not work on separate points in a spasmodic way. It works on the whole in a total and all-comprehensive way. The advance seems slow but it is more complete and nothing is forgotten.

THE MOTHER

Vol. XI. No. 2 April 1954

# THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

## EDITORIALS*

### REALISATION, PAST AND FUTURE

THE whole material and physical world, the whole earth—I mention earth, because we are concerned directly and much more with it than other regions—has been till now governed by forces of consciousness that come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. Even the thing man has named God is a force, a power in the Overmind. The entire universe has been, so to say, under the domination of this status of consciousness. Even then, you have to pass through many intermediary grades or levels to arrive at the Overmind and when you reach there the first impression is that of a dazzling light that almost blinds you. But one can and has to press on and go beyond. Sri Aurobindo says, the rule of the Overmind is precisely coming to its end and the rule of the Supermind will replace it. All the past spiritual experiences were concerned with the Overmind: so it is a thing known to all who have found the Divine and are identified with Him. What Sri Aurobindo says is this that there is something more than the Overmind,

* Based on the Mother's Talks

something that lies a step higher and that it is now the turn of this higher status to come down and reign. We need not talk much of Overmind, because all the saints and seers, all religions and spiritual disciplines, scriptures and philosophies have spoken about it at length. All the gods known and familiar to men are there in its Pantheon. What we want, what is needed at present is a new revelation, a manifestation in a new manner of which very few were conscious in the past. We are not here merely to repeat the past.

But it is so difficult. It is difficult for people to come out of experiences they have had, of what they have heard and read about always and everywhere. It is difficult for them not to think of the Supermind in terms of the Overmind, not to confuse the Supermind with the Overmind. They are unable to conceive of anything beyond or different. Sri Aurobindo used to say always that his Yoga began where all the past Yogas ended: in order to realise his Yoga one must have already arrived at the extreme limit of what the ancients realised. In other words, one must have had already the perception of the Divine, the union and identification with the Divine. This divinity, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Divine of the Overmind which is itself something quite unthinkable for the human consciousness, and even to reach there one has to rise through many planes of consciousness and, as I said, one gets dazzled and dazed even at this level.

There are beings of the vital who, whenever they appear to man, are taken by him for the supreme godhead. You may call it a disguise, but it is a very successful disguise, for people who see it most often get thoroughly convinced that what they see is indeed God himself. And yet such a god is only a vital being. Even so, the beings of the Overmind are stupendous in comparison with us, human beings, who are truly bewildered whenever we come in contact with such entities. And Supermind and supramental beings are yet beyond. So you realise the distance to be covered.

But there is a kind of Grace that comes to your help. If the scientist had again to go over all the experiments that have been done, all what others have found in the past in his line in order to make a further progress, to come to a new discovery, then he will have to pass his whole life in repeating the past and will have no time for anything else. The scientist just opens instead a book or consults another person who is conversant with the past and gets all the knowledge he requires of it. Sri Aurobindo wanted to do something like that in the spiritual domain. He asks you to gather the experience of the past,—it is all there recorded in earth's history, and pass on; basing yourself upon that, you rise up to still higher ranges.

You may pertinently ask, however, why we have not started with overmental beings, we should have had here, say, Vivekanandas only and not ordinary frail human creatures.

You think the work would have been easier? Such beings, on the contrary, would have been less manageable and malleable. For what is most difficult is to convince someone who has had already a realisation. He believes he has reached the goal and no further progress is necessary for him. It generally happens especially to men who have made effort and realised the object of the effort that they stop with that, because they feel they have reached their final goal. They get settled and fixed there. It was their personal goal and they have got it. Their brain gets crystallised and their consciousness fossilised. They will live there all their life and will never know how to move. So I say, those who have had an experience or a realisation in themselves are not necessarily the most advanced. Such a person lacks an element of simplicity, modesty, plasticity that spontaneously come to one who feels that he has not grown fully and has to develop further.

A "realised person", if I may say so graphically and somewhat strongly, is a finished product to be kept in a glass-case for show in a museum. He is a sample showing what has been done and what could be done. But you do not have there the stuff to do more. I would prefer for my work to have someone who may have little knowledge, but who has much good will, a great aspiration, who feels within him this flame, this need to go on. I say, he may know little, he may have realised even less, but here is good material with which one can go far, very far. Besides, there is another point to note. As in mountain-climbing a guide is very useful, even indispensable, who can show you the proper way and make it easy for you to climb higher and higher altitudes, so in spiritual ascension, a guide, if you have the good fortune to meet one, will help you to rise much higher than you could do yourself with your own personal strength and your own personal view of a fixed goal—you are not proud of your discovery and you do not waste time or energy in useless searches and enquiries.

That is why I prefer children—children in body or in soul—and fear grown-ups steeped in erudition and realisation.

30-9-1953.

## DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS

*If the body is ill, does the mind too fall ill?*

Not necessarily, to be sure. Illnesses are, as I have told you, generally a dislocation among the different parts of the being, a kind of disharmony. It may well be that the body has not followed the movement of progress, it might have lagged behind while the other parts have, on the contrary, made progress. In that case there is an unbalance, a breaking of harmony and that produces an illness, I mean, in the body, for the mind and the vital also might remain all right. There are many people who have been ill for years, suffering from terrible and incurable diseases, and still maintained their mental power marvellously clear and active and continuing to make progress in that domain. There was a French poet, a very good poet, Sully Prudhomme, by name; he was mortally ill and it was during that time that he wrote his most beautiful poems. He was always in a very good humour, charming, smiling, pleasant to everyone even while his body was going to bits. You may remember how the great Louis XIV used to joke and laugh, while, in his last days, his body was being lacerated and given over to leeches by his doctors and surgeons. It depends upon individual and individual. For there are people of the other type who get thoroughly disturbed from head to foot if there is the slightest bodily indisposition. Each one has his own combination of the elements.

There is of course a relation between the mind and the body, quite a close relation. In most cases it is the mind that makes the body ill, at least it is the most important factor in the illness. I have said, there are people who keep their mind clear although their body suffers. But it is very rare and very difficult to keep the body healthy when the mind suffers or is unbalanced. It is not impossible, but very very exceptional. For I explained to you that it is the mind which is the master of the body, the body is an obedient and obliging servant. Unfortunately one does not usually know how to make use of one's mind, not only so, one makes bad use of it and as bad as possible. The mind possesses a considerable power of formation and of direct action on the body. It is precisely this power which is used by people to make their body ill. As soon as there is something which does not go well, the mind begins to worry about it, makes formations of coming catastrophes, indulges in all kinds of imaginary dangers ahead. Now, instead of thus letting the mind run amuck and do havoc, if the same energy were used for a better

purpose, if good formations were made, namely, giving self-confidence to the body, telling it that there is nothing to be anxious about, it is only a passing unease and so on, in that case, the body would be put in a right condition of receptivity and the illness pass away quietly even as it came. That is how the mind is to be taught to give good suggestions to the body and not to throw mud into it. Marvellous results follow if you do it properly.

When an accident happens there is in it a critical moment. For example, you slip and you fall. Now between the moment when you slip and the moment when you fall, there is just a fraction of a second when you are, as it were, given the choice. It can either be nothing or something very serious. Only to make the choice you must have a perfectly awakened consciousness and your being must be constantly in contact with the psychic. There is no time to bring in the contact, one must already be in contact. So, just between the slip and the fall, if the mental and psychic formation is sufficient, you come out unscathed. If, on the contrary, the body thinks, as it is its habit, "Oh, I have slipped" and becomes apprehensive—it is, as I say, a matter of a fraction of a second, even less—then the catastrophe happens. You have the capacity to prevent an accident happening, you are given the choice at a momentary moment. But for that you must learn to be wide awake, to be fully conscious. When you are in that condition you can prevent an accident, you can stop an illness coming into you. But it is just the matter of a split second and you must not miss it.

And yet there is still another moment. When you have fallen and are already hurt; you have still now the open chance whether it will turn well or ill, whether it will stop at being just a mishap or become something really serious or as serious as possible. I do not know if you have noticed that there are certain people who do not seem to miss any occasion for an accident. Every time there is a possibility, they have it. And the accident is never slight, it tends to be serious and often very serious. People say, what an unlucky fellow! Chance is never on his side! etc. etc. But all that is sheer ignorance. Everything depends absolutely upon the working of the consciousness. I could cite any number of examples and such striking examples. There are people who might have been killed but came out of the accident safe and sound. There are others for whom what was quite harmless in the beginning turns worse and worse and proves in the end, perhaps, fatal.

But you must understand it is not the working of thought, ordinary thought. The thought may be as good in one as in the other. It all depends upon the moment of choice. There are people who know how to react in the

right manner and at the right moment. It is the character that matters. Such people have a wakeful, alert consciousness; they are not asleep, they are on the watch constantly within themselves. And at the right moment they call for the aid, they invoke the divine force, yes, exactly at the right moment. And the danger is warded off. On the other hand, whenever there is something going wrong, some dislocation in the being, if you are seized by fear, dark foreboding or defeatism in the consciousness, then you are done for.

It is not the mind, as I say, which decides. It is an inner attitude, a poise of the being, the right consciousness which reacts in the right manner. Its effect goes very far. You do not know what a power it is. Even if it is there just for a fraction of a second, it works miracles. Only it must be there already, you must be already in the state of wakefulness, you cannot order it at the moment, you have no time.

You may say again that it is the Divine Grace that saves. But would you explain to me how it works? It would be interesting indeed to find out who had precisely the awakened consciousness, had the faith and the inner trust, had called for the help and had in him that which answered automatically —and even in a way unconsciously—to something that came in. Human intelligence is a relative thing and has varying degrees of power. Usually it understands by contrasts and contraries. It does not understand a truth in its absoluteness. For example, I have received hundreds of letters thanking me because they were saved from dangers. But I do not remember to have received a letter thanking me because things were normal and nothing had happened. Men perceive the action of Grace only when there is the atmosphere of the pessimist and there is a danger and they have escaped from it, that is to say, when there is already the beginning of the accident, when the accident has come to pass. When they come out of the danger safely only then they take note of the force that saved. Otherwise they would not have even thought of it. If the voyage they undertook came off without any accident they would not think of any action of Grace present there. They would take it as a matter of course. But precisely because it is so, there may be acting here a Grace of a higher order and there may be existing already a deeper preexistent harmony between the consciousness of the person and the higher force to which it responds. The chance of an accident is already the beginning of the dislocation I spoke of. But the situation becomes complicated if it is a case of collective accident. The result here depends upon the atmosphere of the persons involved. It is the proportion of these two

elements in the personnel of a collective accident that determines the character and magnitude of the accident.

I will tell you a story, I mean a true story, in this connection. There was a pilot who was considered what is called an *ace* among his fellowmen in the first Great War. He was an extraordinary aviator and the hero of many victories. Nothing had happened to him at any time. But towards the end of his life, an event occurred—some private tragedy—and all at once he had the feeling that something was going to happen to him; an accident perhaps, and it was all finished with him. He had come out of the war but was still in the army. He wanted to make a flight to South Africa, from France right up to the south of Africa. He started from France and made for Madagascar, so far as I remember, and then wanted to fly back to France. Now, my brother was at that time the Governor of Congo and needed to join his post as soon as possible. He asked for a place in the aeroplane of the pilot I am speaking about. It was not a regular service plane, but one of those used for experimentation to show what the machines were capable of and the skill of the airmen. Many tried to dissuade my brother from making the journey, saying that these adventurous trips were always dangerous. My brother however did not mind the risk. Nothing serious happened, but for a slight breakdown in the middle of the Sahara which was easily got over, and the plane made safe journey and deposited him at his place in Congo. The plane continued further down, to Madagascar, as I said. Now the pilot started back, he did half the journey, his plane crashed and he was killed forthwith. I shall explain to you what really the matter was. What happened had to happen, it was a foregone conclusion. My brother had an absolute faith in his destiny, a certainty that nothing would touch him. The consciousness of the other was on the contrary full of doubt and apprehension. So the mixture of the two atmospheres brought about this that in the first instance the accident could not be prevented, but it stopped short of catastrophe. But once the destiny of my brother was not there with the machine,—like Caesar's destiny that made the boatman go safely across the river through a storm—the protection was also withdrawn and the pilot had to go down under the full blast of his bad fate. I can narrate another analogous story, it is with regard to a ship. There were two persons, husband and wife. They went by air to Indo-China. They had an accident, a very serious accident. All were killed except only these two. Now they had to return to France. They did not want to travel by air, they had the experience of it. So they took a boat, I mean a ship, which they thought would be quite safe. Now what happened

was absolutely unexpected, quite extraordinary. In the middle of the Red Sea, in broad daylight, the ship struck against a reef and sank—a thing that does not happen even once perhaps in a million cases. All the passengers were drowned expect, miraculous again to say, the pair. There are people like that, they carry misfortune with them, but the misfortune is for others, they themselves escape somehow.

If you look at the thing in an ordinary way, you do not notice it. But the fact is there. You must be very careful about your associations. An unfortunate association may prove disastrous to you. The *karma* of others may fall upon you, unless yon have the inner knowledge, the vision and the necessary power. If you see a person with something like a dark whirl around avoid him at all cost. The moral of it all is that it is very useful to look into things a little mote deeply than to observe the surface only.

23-12-1953

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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All is not settled when a cause is humanly lost and hopeless;
all is settled, only when the soul renounces its effort.

SRI AUROBINDO

# ILION

## (A Fragment)

GRANDIOSE, calm in her gait, imperious, awing the regions,
Hera came in her pride, the spouse of Zeus and his sister.
As at her birth from the foam of the spaces white Aphrodite
Rose in the cloud of her golden hair like the moon in its halo.
Aegis-bearing Athene, shielded and helmeted, answered
Rushing the call and the heavens thrilled with the joy of her foot-steps
Dumbly repeating her name, as insulted and trampled by beauty
Thrill might the soul of a lover and cry out the name of its tyrant.
Others there were as mighty; for Artemis, archeress ancient,
Came on her sandals lightning-tasselled. Up the vast incline
Shaking the world with the force of his advent thundered Poseidon;
Space grew full of his stride and his cry. Immortal Apollo
Shone and his silver clang was heard with alarm in our kingdoms.
Ares' impetuous eyes looked forth from a cloud-drift of splendour;
Themis' steps appeared and Ananke, the mystic Erinnys
Nor was Hephaestus' flaming strength from his father divided.
Even the ancient Dis to arrive dim-featured, eternal,
Seemed; but his rays are the shades and his voice is the call of the silence.

Into the courts divine they crowded, radiant, burning,
Perfect in utter grace and light. The joy of their spirits
Calls to eternal Time and the glories of Space are his answer:
Thence were these bright worlds born and persist by the throb of their heart-beats.
Not in the forms that mortals have seen when assisted they scatter
Mists of this earthly dust from their eyes in their moments of greatness
Shone those unaging Powers; nor as in our centuries radiant
Mortal-seeming bodies they wore when they mixed with our nations.
Then the long youth of the world had not faded still out of our natures,
Flowers and the sunlight were felt and the earth was glad like a mother.
Then for a human delight they were masked in this denser vesture
Earth desires for her bliss,—thin veils, for the god through them glimmered.
Quick were men's days with the throng of the brilliant presences near them:
Gods from the wood and the valley, gods from the obvious wayside,

Gods on the secret hills leaped out from their light on the mortal.
Oft in the haunt and the grove they met with our kind and their touches
Seized and subjected our clay to the greatness of passions supernal,
Grasping the earthly virgin and forcing heaven on this death-dust.
Glorifying human beauty Apollo roamed in our regions
Clymene when he pursued or yearned in vain for Marpessa;
Glorifying earth with a human-seeming face of the beauty
Brought from her heavenly climes Aphrodite mixed with Anchises.
Glimpsed in the wilds were the Satyrs, seen in the woodlands the Graces,
Dryad and Naiad in river and forest, Oreads haunting
Glens and the mountain-glades where they played with the manes of our lions
Glimmered on death-claimed eyes; for the gods then were near us and clasped us,
Heaven leaned down in love with our clay and yearned to its transience.
But we have coarsened in heart and in mood; we have turned in our natures
Nearer our poorer kindred, leaned to the ant and the ferret.
Sight we have darkened with sense and power we have stifled with labour,
Likened in mood to the things we gaze at and are in our vestures:
Therefore we toil unhelped; we are left to our weakness and blindness.
Not in those veils now they rose to their skies, but like loose-fitting mantles
Dropped in the vestibules huge of their vigorous realms that besiege us,
All that reminded of earth; then clothed with raiment of swiftness
Straight they went quivering up in a glory like fire or the storm-blast.
Even those natural vestures of puissance they leave when they enter
Mind's more subtle fields and agree with its limitless regions
Peopled by creatures of bliss and forms more true than earth's shadows,—
Mind that pure from this density, throned in her splendours immortal,
Looks up at Light and suffers bliss from ineffable kingdoms
Where beyond Mind and its rays is the gleam of a glory supernal:
There our sun cannot shine and our moon has no place for her lustres,
There our lightnings flash not, nor fire of these spaces is suffered.
They with bodies impalpable here to our touch and our seeing,
But for a higher delight, to a brighter sense, with more sweetness
Palpable there and visible, thrilled with a lordlier joyance,
Came to the courts of Zeus and his heavens sang to their footsteps.
Harmonies flowed through the blissful coils of the kingdoms of rapture.

SRI AUROBINDO

# HYMN TO INDRA[1]

1. O Indra, fill us with soundness and a *movement*[2]—victorious and of enduring force, utterly abundant *to our desire.*[3]

2. O thou by whose strong action we through the destruction of their limiting hold *encounter successfully*[4] the obstructing gods, O hammerer of the foe.[5]

3. O Indra, O Hammerer, smiting we hurl abroad the Vajra; may we wholly conquer in fight our jealous foes.

4. We, O Indra, by the armed gods and by thee joined to us in Yoga, put forth constantly our strength in war.

5. Mighty indeed is Indra and supreme, may the strength of the Mahat be with the wielder of the lightning as the sky is variedly brilliant with *the wideness*[6] that fills it.

6. For he enjoyeth alike whether in the safe keeping of one little among men or of the *thoughtful wise.*[7]

7. He that is a swallowing gulf devouring freely the nectar, and like a sea he drinketh these wide waters as if they were *pools.*[8]

8. Therefore is the soul's brilliant strong-actioned laud of truth like a ripe branch to the giver.

9. Therefore do thy puissances, and the expansions of thee, O Indra, become active at once in awareness to the giver that *hath the power to contain them.*[9]

10. Therefore are the soul's desirable (and noble things) and its praise and adoration (to be declared to) for Indra that he may drink the nectar-juice.

SRI AUROBINDO

[1] Rig Veda 1. 8
Rishi: Madhucchandas
[2] Or, delight
[3] Or, for our expansion
[4] Or, stay the activity of
[5] *Tvotāso* - provisional
[6] Or, wide one
[7] Or, strong in thought
[8] *Kākudah* - doubtful
[9] *Māvate* - provisional

# PURNA YOGA*

## I

### The Entire Purpose of Yoga

BY Yoga we can rise out of falsehood into truth, out of weakness into force, out of pain and grief into bliss, out of bondage into freedom, out of death into immortality, out of darkness into light, out of confusion into purity, out of imperfection into perfection, out of self-division into unity, out of Maya into God. All other utilisation of Yoga is for special and fragmentary advantages not always worth pursuing. Only that which aims at possessing the fullness of God is Purna Yoga; the sadhaka of the Divine Perfection is the Purna Yogin.

Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves *siddhas* in Purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection. It does not matter if for the present we fall short of our aim, so long as we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the attempt and by living constantly in it and for it move forward even two inches upon the road; even that will help to lead humanity out of struggle and twilight in which it now dwells into the luminous joy which God intends for us. But whatever our immediate success, our unvarying aim must be to perform the whole journey and not lie down content in any wayside stage or imperfect resting place.

All Yoga which takes us entirely away from the world, is a high but narrow specialisation of divine *tapasya*. God in His perfection embraces everything; we also must become all-embracing.

God in His ultimate existence beyond all manifestation and all knowledge, is the Absolute Parabrahman; in relation to the world He is that which transcends all universal existence while regarding it or in turning away from it; He is that which contains and upholds the universe, He is that which becomes the universe and He is the universe and everything which it contains.

* From old writings

He is also Absolute and Supreme Personality playing in the universe and as the universe; in the universe He appears to be its Soul and Lord, as the universe He appears to be the motion or process of the Will of the Lord and to become all the subjective and objective results of the motion. All the states of the Brahman, the transcendent, the continent, the universal, the individual are informed and sustained by the divine Personality. He is both the Existent and the state of existence. We call the state of existence the Impersonal Brahman, the Existent the Personal Brahman. There is no difference between them except to the play of our consciousness; for every impersonal state depends upon a manifest or secret Personality and can reveal the Personality which it holds and veils, and every Personality attaches to itself and can plunge itself into an impersonal existence. This they can do because Personality and Impersonality are merely different states of self-consciousness in our Absolute Being.

Philosophies and religions dispute about the priority of different aspects of God and different Yogins, Rishis and Saints have preferred this or that philosophy or religion. Our business is not to dispute about any of them, but to realise and become all of them, not to follow after any aspect to the exclusion of the rest, but to embrace God in all His aspects and beyond aspect.

God descending into world in various forms has consummated on this earth the mental and bodily form which we call humanity.

He has manifested in the world through the play of all-governing Soul with its own formative Will or Shakti, a rhythm of existence of which Matter is the lowest term and pure being the highest. Mind and Life stand upon Matter (*Manas* and *Prāṇa* on *Annam*) and make the lower half of world-existence (*aparārdha*); pure Consciousness and pure Bliss proceed out of pure Being (*Chit* and *Ananda* out of *Sat*) and make the upper half of world-existence (*parārdha*). Pure Idea (*Vijnana*) stands as the link between the two. These seven principles or terms of existence are the basis of the seven-fold world of the Puranas (Satyaloka, Tapas, Jana, Mahar, Swar, Bhuvar and Bhur).

The lower hemisphere in this arrangement of consciousness consists of the three *vyāhritis* of the Veda, "Bhur, Bhuvah, Swar"; they are states of consciousness in which the principles of the upper world are expressed or try to express themselves under different conditions. Pure in their own homes, they are in this foreign country subject to perverse, impure and disturbing combinations and workings. The ultimate object of life is to

get rid of the perversity, impurity and disturbance and express them perfectly in these other conditions. Our life on this earth is a divine poem that we are translating into earthly language or a strain of music which we are rendering into words.

Being in Sat is one in multiplicity, one that regards its multiplicity without being lost or confused in it and multiplicity that knows itself as one without losing the power of multiple play in the universe. Under the conditions of mind, life and body, *ahamkāra* is born, the subjective or objective form of consciousness is falsely taken for self-existent being, the body for an independent reality and the ego for an independent personality; the one looses itself in us in its multiplicity and when it recovers its unity, finds it difficult, owing to the nature of mind, to preserve its play of multiplicity. Therefore when we are absorbed in world, we miss God in Himself, when we see God, we miss Him in the world. Our business is to break down and dissolve the mental ego and get back to our divine unity without losing our power of individual and multiple existence in the universe.

Consciousness in Chit is luminous, free, illimitable and effective; that which it is aware of as Chit (*jñānaśakti*) it fulfills infallibly as Tapas (*kriyā-śakti*); for Jnana Shakti is only the stable and comprehensive, Kriya Shakti only the motional and intensive form of one self-luminous Conscious Being. They are one power of conscious force of God (Chit-Shakti of Sat-Purusha). But in the lower hemisphere, under the conditions of mind, life and body, the luminousness becomes divided and broken up into uneven rays, the freedom trammelled by egoism and unequal forms, the effectiveness veiled by the uneven play of forces. We have, therefore, states of consciousness, non-consciousness and false consciousness, knowledge and ignorance and false knowledge, effective force and inertia and ineffective force. Our business is by renouncing our divided and unequal individual force of action and thought into the one, undivided universal Chit-shakti of Kali to replace our egoistic activities by the play in our body of the universal Kali and thus exchange blindness and ignorance for knowledge and ineffective human strength for the divine effective Force.

Delight in Ananda is pure, unmixed, one and yet multitudinous. Under the conditions of mind, life and body it becomes divided, limited, confused and misdirected and owing to shocks of unequal forces and uneven distribution of Ananda subject to the duality of positive and negative movements, grief and joy, pain and pleasure. Our business is to dissolve these dualities by breaking down their cause and plunge ourselves into the ocean of divine

bliss, one, multitudionous, evenly distributed (*sama*), which takes delight from all things and recoils painfully from none.

In brief, we have to replace dualities by unity, egoism by divine consciousness, ignorance by divine wisdom, thought by divine knowledge, weakness, struggle and effort by self-contented divine force, pain and false pleasure by divine bliss. This is called in the language of Christ bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth, or in modern language, realising and effectuating God in the world.

Humanity is, upon earth, the form of life chosen for this human aspiration and divine accomplishment; all other forms of life either do not need it or are ordinarily incapable of it unless they change into humanity. The divine fullness is therefore the sole real aim of humanity. It has to be effected in the individual in order that it may be effected in the race.

Humanity is a mental existence in a living body; its basis is matter, its centre and instrument mind and its medium life. This is the condition of average or natural humanity.

In every human being there is concealed (*avyakta*) the four higher principles. Mahas, pure ideality in *vijñāna*, is not a *vvāhriti* but the source of the *vyāhritis*, the bank upon which mental, vital and bodily action draw and turn its large and infinite wealth into small coin of the lower existence. Vijnana being the link between the divine state and the human animal is the door of escape for man into the supernatural or divine humanity.

Inferior mankind gravitates downward from mind towards life and body; average mankind dwells constant in mind limited by and looking towards life and body; superior mankind levitates upward either to idealised mentality or to pure idea, direct truth of knowledge and spontaneous truth of existence; supreme mankind rises to divine beatitude and from that level either goes upward to pure Sat and Parabrahman or remains to beatify its lower members and raise to divinity in itself and others this human existence.

The man who dwells in the higher or divine and now hidden hemisphere of his consciousness, having rent the veil, is the true superman and the last product of that progressive self-manifestation of God in world, Spirit out of matter, which is now called the principle of evolution.

To rise into divine existence, force, light and bliss and recast in that mould all mundane existence is the supreme aspiration of religion and the complete practical aim of Yoga. The aim is to realise God in the universe, but it cannot be done without realising God transcendent of the universe.

## II

## PARABRAHMAN, MUKTI AND HUMAN THOUGHT SYSTEMS

Parabrahman is the Absolute, and because It is the Absolute, it cannot be reduced into terms of knowledge. You can know the Infinite in a way, but you cannot know the Absolute.

All things in existence or non-existence are symbols of the Absolute created in self-consciousness (Chid-Atman); by its symbols the Absolute can be known so far as the symbols reveal or hint at it, but even the knowledge of the whole sum of symbols does not amount to real knowledge of the Absolute. You can become Parabrahman; you cannot know Parabrahman. Becoming Parabrahman means going back through self-consciousness into Parabrahman, for you already are That, only you have projected yourself forward in self-consciousness into its terms or symbols, Purusha and Prakriti through which you uphold the universe. Therefore, to become Parabrahman void of terms or symbols you must cease out of the universe.

By becoming Parabrahman void of Its self-symbols you do not become anything you are not already, nor does the universe cease to operate. It only means that God throws back out of the ocean of manifest consciousness one stream or movement of Himself into that from which all consciousness proceeded.

All who go out of universe consciousness, do not necessarily go into parabrahman. Some go into undifferentiated Nature (*Avyākrita Prakriti*), some lose themselves in God, some pass into a dark state of non-recognition of universe, (*Asat*, *Shunya*), some into a luminous state of non-recognition of universe—Pure undifferentiated Atman, Pure Sat or Existence-Basis of universe,—some into a temporary state of deep sleep (*Sushupti*) in the impersonal principles of Ananda, Chit or Sat. All these are forms of release and the ego gets from God by His Maya or Prakriti the impulse towards any one of them to which the supreme Purusha chooses to direct him. Those whom He wishes to liberate, yet keep in the world, He makes *jivanmuktas* or sends them out again as His *vibhutis*, they consenting to wear for the divine purposes a temporary veil of Avidya, which does not at all bind them and which they can rend or throw off very easily.

Therefore to lust after becoming Parabrahman is a sort of luminous illusion or sattwic play of Maya; for in reality there is none bound or none free and none needing to be freed and all is only God's Lila, Parabrahman's play of manifestation. God uses this sattwic Maya in certain egos in order to draw them upwards in the line of His special purpose and for these egos it is the only right and possible path.

But the aim of our Yoga is Jivanmukti in the universe; we have to live released in the world, not released out of the world, not because we need to be freed or for any other reason, but because that is God's will in us.

The Jivanmukta has, for perfect knowledge and self-fulfilment to stand on the threshold of Parabrahman, but not to cross the threshold. The statement he brings back from the threshold is that That is and we are That, but what That is or is not, words cannot describe, nor mind discriminate.

Parabrahman being the Absolute is indescribable by any name or definite conception. It is not Being or Non-Being, but something of which Being and Non-Being are primary symbols; not Atman or un-Atman or Maya; not Personality or Impersonality; not Quality or Non-Quality; not Consciousness or Non-Consciousness; not Bliss or Non-Bliss; not Purusha or Prakriti; not god nor man nor animal; not release nor bondage; but something of which all these are primary or derivative, general or particular symbols. Still, when we say Parabrahman is not this or that, we mean that It cannot in its essentiality be limited to this or that symbol or any sum of symbols; in a sense Parabrahman is all this and all this is Parabrahman. There is nothing else which all this can be. Parabrahman being Absolute is not subject to logic, for logic applies only to the determinate. We talk confusion if we say that the Absolute cannot manifest the determinate and therefore the universe is false or non-existent. The very nature of the Absolute is that we do not know what it is or is not, what it can do or cannot do; we have no reason to suppose that there is anything it cannot do or that its Absoluteness is limited by any kind of impotency. We experience spiritually that when we go beyond everything else we come to something Absolute; we experience spiritually that the universe is in the nature of a manifestation proceeding, as it were, from the Absolute; but all these words and phrases are merely intellectual terms trying to express the inexpressible. We must state what we see as best we can, but need not dispute what others see or state; rather we must accept and in our own system locate and account for what they have seen and stated. Our only dispute is with those who

deny credit to the vision or freedom and value to the statements of others; not with those who are content with stating their own vision.

A philosophical or religious system is only a statement of that arrangement of existence in universe which God has revealed to us as our status of being. It is given in order that the mind may have something to stand upon while we act in Prakriti. But our vision need not be precisely the same in arrangement as the vision of others, nor is the form of thought that suits our mentality bound to suit a mentality differently constituted. Firmness, without dogmatism, in our own system, toleration, without weakness, of all other systems should therefore be our intellectual outlook.

You will find disputants questioning your system on the ground that it is not consistent with this or that Shastra or this or that great authority, whether philosophers, saints or Avatars. Remember then that realisation and experience are alone of essential importance. What Shankara argued or Vivekananda conceived intellectually about existence or even what Ramakrishna stated from his multitudinous and varied realisations, is only of value to you so far as you are moved by God to accept and renew it in your own experience. The opinions of thinkers and saints and Avatars should be accepted as hints but not as fetters. What matters to you is what you have seen or what God in His universal personality or impersonally or again personally in some teacher, Guru or path-finder undertakes to show to you in the path of Yoga.

## III

God or Para Purusha is Parabrahman unmanifest and inexpressible turned towards a certain kind of manifestation or expression, of which the two eternal terms are Atman and Jagati, Self and Universe. Atman becomes in self-symbol all existences in the universe; so too, the universe when known, resolves all its symbols into Atman. God being Parabrahman is Himself Absolute, neither Atman nor Maya nor un-Atman, neither Being nor Not-Being, (*Sat*, *Asat*), neither Becoming nor non-Becoming (*Sambhuti*, *Asambhuti*), neither Quality nor non-Quality (*Saguna*, *Nirguna*); neither Consciousness nor non-Consciousness (*Chaitanya*, *Jada*); neither Soul nor Nature (*Purusha*, *Prakriti*), neither Bliss nor non-Bliss; neither man, nor god nor animal; He is beyond all these things, He maintains and contains all these things in Himself as world; He is and becomes all these things.

The only difference between Parabrahman and Parapurusha is that we think of the first as something beyond our universe-existence, expressed here indeed, but still inexpressible, and of the second as something approaching our universe-existence, inexpressible indeed, but still here expressed. It is as if, in reading a translation of the Ramayana or Homer's Iliad, we were to look at the unapproachable something no translator can seize and say "This is not the Ramayana," "This is not the Iliad" and yet, looking at the comparative adequacy of the expressions which do succeed in catching something of the original spirit and intention, were at the same time to say "This is Valmikie" "This is Homer,". There is no other difference except this of standpoint. The Upanishads speak of the Absolute Parabrahman as Tat; they say Sa when they speak of the Absolute Para-Purusha.

SRI AUROBINDO

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He who would win high spiritual degrees, must pass endless tests and examinations. But most are anxious only to bribe the examiner.

SRI AUROBINDO

# THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE*

## Chapter IX

### THE RELEASE FROM THE EGO

THE formation of a mental and vital ego tied to the body sense was the first great labour of the cosmic Life in its progressive evolution; for this was the means it found for creating out of matter a conscious individual. The dissolution of this limiting ego is the one condition, the necessary means for this very cosmic Life to arrive at its divine fruition: for only so can the conscious individual find either his transcendent self or his true Person. This double movement is usually represented as a fall and a redemption or a creation and a destruction,—the kindling of a light and its extinction or the formation first of a smaller temporary and unreal self and a release from it into our true self's eternal largeness. For human thought falls apart towards two opposite extremes: one, mundane and pragmatic, regards the fulfilment and satisfaction of the mental, vital and physical ego-sense individual or collective as the object of life and looks no farther, while the other spiritual, philosophic or religious which regards the conquest of the ego in the interests of the soul, spirit or whatever be the ultimate entity, as the one thing supremely worth doing. Even in the camp of the ego there are two divergent attitudes which divide the mundane or materialist theory of the universe. One tendency of this thought regards the mental ego as a creation of our mentality which will be dissolved with the dissolution of mind by the death of the body; the one abiding truth is eternal Nature working in the race—this or another—and her purpose should be followed, not ours. The fulfilment of the race, the collective ego, and not that of the individual should be the rule of life. Another trend of thought, more vitalistic in its tendencies, fixes on the conscious ego as the supreme achievement of Nature, no matter how transitory, ennobles it into a human representative of the Will-to-be and holds up its greatness and satisfaction as the highest aim of our existence. In the more numerous systems that take their stand on some kind of religious

* *Synthesis of Yoga* Chapter XXI (*Arya* Vol. III), revised by Sri Aurobindo.

thought or spiritual discipline there is a corresponding divergence. The Buddhist denies the existence of a real self or ego, admits no universal or transcendent Being. The Advaitin declares the apparently individual soul to be none other than the supreme Self and Brahman, its individuality an illusion; the putting off of individual existence is the only true release. Other systems assert, in flat contradiction of this view, the eternal persistence of the human soul; a basis of multiple consciousness in the One or else a dependent but still separate entity, it is constant, real, imperishable.

Amidst these various and conflicting opinions the seeker of the Truth has to decide for himself which shall be for him the Knowledge. But if our aim is a spiritual release or a spiritual fulfilment, then the exceeding of this little mould of ego is imperative. In the human egoism and its satisfaction there can be no divine culmination and deliverance. A certain purification from egoism is the condition even of ethical progress and elevation, for social good and perfection; much more is it indispensable for inner peace, purity and joy. But a much more radical deliverance, not only from egoism but from ego-idea and ego-sense, is needed if our aim is to raise human into divine nature. Experience shows that, in proportion as we deliver ourselves from the limiting mental and vital ego, we command a wider life, a larger existence, a higher consciousness, a happier soul-state, even a greater knowledge, power and scope. Even the aim which the most mundane philosophy pursues, the fulfilment, perfection, satisfaction of the individual is best assured not by satisfying the same ego but by finding freedom in a higher and larger self. There is no happiness in smallness of the being, says the Scripture, it is with the large being that happiness comes. The ego is by its nature a smallness of being; it brings contraction of the consciousness and with the contraction limitation of knowledge, disabling ignorance,—confinement and a diminution of power and by that diminution incapacity and weakness—scission of oneness and by that scission disharmony and failure of sympathy and love and understanding,—inhibition or fragmentation of delight of being and by that fragmentation pain and sorrow. To recover what is lost we must break out of the worlds of ego. The ego must either disappear in impersonality or fuse into a larger I: it must fuse in the wider cosmic 'I' which comprehends all these smaller selves or the transcendent of which even the cosmic self is a diminished image.

But this cosmic self is spiritual in essence and in experience; it must not be confused with the collective existence, with any group soul or the life and body of a human society or even of all mankind. The subordination of the

ego to the progress and happiness of the human race is now a governing idea in the world's thought and ethics; but this is a mental and moral and not a spiritual ideal. For that progress is a series of constant mental, vital and physical vicissitudes, it has no firm spiritual content, and offers no sure standing-ground to the soul of man. The consciousness of collective humanity is only a larger comprehensive edition or a sum of individual egos. Made of the same substance, in the same mould of nature, it has not in it any greater light, any more eternal sense of itself, any purer source of peace, joy and deliverance. It is rather even more tortured, troubled and obscured, certainly more vague, confused and unprogressive. The individual is in this respect greater than the mass and cannot be called on to subordinate his more luminous possibilities to this darker entity. If light, peace, deliverance, a better state of existence are to come, they must descend into the soul from something wider than the individual but also from something higher than the collective ego. Altruism, philanthropy, the service of mankind are in themselves mental or moral ideals, not laws of the spiritual life. If in the spiritual aim there enters the impulse to deny the personal self or to serve humanity or the world at large, it comes not from the ego nor from the collective sense of the race, but from something more occult and profound transcendent of both these things; for it is founded on a sense of the Divine in all and it works not for the sake of ego or the race but for the sake of the Divine and its purpose in the person or group or Man collective. It is this transcendent Source which we must seek and serve, this vaster being and consciousness to which the race and the individual are minor terms of its existence.

There is indeed a truth behind the pragmatic impulse which an exclusive one-sided spirituality is apt to ignore or deny or belittle. It is this that since the individual and the universal are terms of that higher and vaster Being, their fulfilment must have some real place in the supreme Existence. There must be behind them some high purpose in the supreme Wisdom and Knowledge, some eternal strain in the supreme Delight: they cannot have been, they were not, created in vain. But the perfection and satisfaction of humanity like the perfection and satisfaction of the individual, can only be securely compassed and founded upon a more eternal yet unseized truth and right of things. Minor terms of some greater Existence, they can fulfil themselves only when that of which they are the terms is known and possessed. The greatest service to humanity, the surest foundation for its true progress, happiness and perfection is to prepare or find the way by which the individual

and the collective man can transcend the ego and live in its true self, no longer bound to ignorance, incapacity, disharmony and sorrow. It is by the pursuit of the eternal and not by living bound in the slow collective evolution of Nature that we can best assure even that evolutionary, collective, altruistic aim our modern thought and idealism have set before us. But it is in itself a secondary aim; to find, know and possess the Divine existence, consciousness and nature and to live in it for the Divine is our true aim and the one perfection to which we must aspire.

It is then in the way of the spiritual philosophies and religions, not in that of any earth-bound materialistic doctrine, that the seeker of the highest knowledge has to walk, even if with enriched aims and a more comprehensive spiritual purpose. But how far has he to proceed in the elimination of the ego? In the ancient way of Knowledge we arrive at the elimination of the ego-sense which attaches itself to the body, to the life, to the mind and says of all or any of them, "This is I". Not only do we, as in the way of works, get rid of the "I" of the worker and see the Lord alone as the true source of all works and sanction of works and His executive Nature-power or else His supreme Shakti as the sole agent and worker,—but we get rid also of the ego-sense which mistakes the instruments or the expressions of our being for our true self and spirit. But even if all this has been done, something remains still; there remains a substratum of all these, a general sense of the separate I. This substratum ego is something vague, indefinable, elusive; it does not or need not attach itself to anything in particular as the self; it does not identify itself with anything collective; it is a sort of fundamental form or power of the mind which compels the mental being to feel himself as a perhaps indefinable but still a limited being which is not mind, life or body but under which their activities proceed in Nature. The others were a qualified ego-idea and ego-sense supporting themselves on the play of the Prakriti; but this is the pure fundamental ego-power supporting itself on the consciousness of the mental Purusha. And because it seems to be above or behind the play and not in it, because it does not say "I am the mind, life or body," but "I am a being on whom the action of mind, life and body depends," many think themselves released and mistake this elusive Ego for the One, the Divine, the true Purusha or at the very least for the true Person within them,—mistaking the indefinable for the Infinite. But so long as this fundamental ego-sense remains, there is no absolute release. The egoistic life, even if diminished in force and intensity, can still continue well enough with this support. If there is the error in identification, the ego life may under that

pretext get rather exaggerated intensity and force. Even if there is no such error, the ego life may be wider, purer, more flexible and release may be now much easier to attain and nearer to accomplishment, but still there is as yet no definitive release. It is imperative to go farther, to get rid of this indefinable but fundamental ego-sense also and get back to the Purusha on whom it is supporting itself, of whom it is a shadow; the shadow has to disappear and by its disappearance reveal the spirit's unclouded substance.

That substance is the self of the man called in European thought the Monad, in Indian philosophy, Jiva or Jivatman, the living entity, the self of the living creature. This Jiva is not the mental ego-sense constructed by the workings of Nature for her temporary purpose. It is not a thing bound, as the mental being, the vital, the physical are bound, by her habits, laws or processes. The Jiva is a spirit and self, superior to Nature. It is true that it consents to her acts, reflects her moods and upholds the triple medium of mind, life and body through which she casts them upon the soul's consciousness; but it is itself a living reflection or a soul-form or a self-creation of the Spirit universal and transcendent. The One Spirit who has mirrored some of His modes of being in the world and in the soul, is multiple in the Jiva. That Spirit is the very Self of ourself, the One and the Highest, the Supreme we have to realise, the infinite existence into which we have to enter. And so far the teachers walk in company, all agreeing that this is the supreme object of knowledge, of works and of devotion, all agreeing that if it is to be attained, the Jiva must release himself from the ego-sense which belongs to the lower Nature or Maya. But here they part company and each goes his own way. The Monist fixes his feet on the path of an exclusive Knowledge and sets for us as sole ideal an entire return, loss, immersion or extinction of the Jiva in the Supreme. The Dualist or the partial Monist turns to the path of Devotion and directs us to shed indeed the lower ego and material life, but to see as the highest destiny of the spirit of man, not the self-annihilation of the Buddhist, not the self-immersion of the Adwaitin, not a swallowing up of the many by the One, but an eternal existence absorbed in the thought, love and enjoyment of the Supreme, the One, the All-Lover.

For the disciple of an integral Yoga there can be no hesitation; as a seeker of knowledge it is the integral knowledge and not anything either half-way and attractive or high-pinnacled and exclusive he must seek. He must soar to the utmost height, but also circle and spread to the most all-embracing wideness, not binding himself to any rigid structure of metaphysical

thought, but free to admit and contain all the soul's highest and greatest and fullest and most numerous experiences. If the highest height of spiritual experience, the sheer summit of all realisation is the absolute union of the soul with the Transcendent who exceeds the individual and the universe, the widest scope of that union is the discovery of that very Transcendent as the source, support, continent, informing and constituent spirit and substance of both these manifesting powers of the divine Essence and the divine Nature. Whatever the path, this must be for him the goal. The Yoga of Action also is not fulfilled, is not absolute, is not victoriously complete until the seeker has felt and lives in his essential and integral oneness with the Supreme. One he must be with the Divine will in his highest and inmost and in his widest being and consciousness, in work, his will, his power of action, his mind, body, life. Otherwise he is only released from the illusion of individual works, but not released from the illusion of separate being and instrumentality. As the servant and instrument of the Divine, he works, but the crown of his labour and its perfect base or motive is oneness with that which he serves and fulfils. The Yoga of devotion too is complete only when the lover and the Beloved are unified and difference is abolished in the ecstasy of a divine oneness, and yet in the mystery of this unification there is the sole existence of the Beloved but no existinction or absorption of the lover. It is the highest unity which is the express direction of the path of knowledge, the call to absolute oneness is its impulse, the experience of it its magnet: but it is this very highest unity which takes as its field of manifestation in him the largest possible cosmic wideness. Obeying the necessity to withdraw successively from the practical egoism of our triple nature and its fundamental ego-sense, we come to the realisation of the spirit, the self, lord of this individual human manifestation, but our knowledge is not integral if we do not make this self in the individual one with the cosmic spirit and find their greater reality above in an inexpressible but not unknowable Transcendence. That Jiva, possessed of himself, must give himself up into the being of the Divine. The self of the man must be made one with the Self of all; the self of the finite individual must pour itself into the boundless finite and that cosmic spirit must be exceeded in transcendent Infinite.

This cannot be done without an uncompromising abolition of the ego-sense at its very basis and source. In the path of Knowledge one attempts this abolition, negatively by a denial of the reality of the ego, positively by a constant fixing of the thought upon the idea of the One and the In-

finite in itself or the One and Infinite everywhere. This, if persistently done changes in the end the mental outlook on oneself and the whole world and there is a kind of mental realisation; but afterwards by degrees or perhaps rapidly and imperatively and almost at the beginning the mental realisation deepens into spiritual experience—a realisation in the very substance of our being. More and more frequent conditions come of something indefinable and illimitable, a peace, a silence, a joy, a bliss beyond expression, a sense of absolute impersonal Power, a pure existence, a pure consciousness, an all-pervading Presence. The ego persists in itself or in its habitual movements, but the peace of the one becomes more and more inured, the others are broken, crushed, more and more rejected, becoming weak in their intensity, limp or mechanical in their action. In the end there is a constant giving up of the whole consciouness into the being of the Supreme. In the beginning when the restless confusion and obscuring impurity of our outward nature is active, when the mental, vital, physical ego-sense are still powerful, this new mental outlook, these experiences may be found difficult in the extreme: but once that triple egoism is discouraged or moribund and the instruments of the Spirit are set right and purified, in an entirely pure, silent, clarified, widened consciousness the purity, infinity, stillness of the One reflects itself like the sky in a limpid lake. A meeting or a taking in of the reflected Consciousness by that which reflects it becomes more and more pressing and possible, the bridging or abolition of the atmospheric gulf between that immutable ethereal impersonal vastness and this once mobile whirl or narrow stream of personal existence is no longer an arduous improbability and may be even a frequent experience, if not yet an entirely permanent state. For even before complete purification, if the strings of the egoistic heart and mind are already sufficiently frayed and loosened, the Jiva can by a sudden snapping of the main cords escape, ascending like a bird freed into the spaces or widening like a liberated flood into the One and Infinite. There is first a sudden sense of a cosmic consciousness, a casting of oneself into the universal; from that universality one can aspire more easily, aspire to the Transcendent. There is a pushing back and rending or a rushing down of the walls that imprisoned our conscious being; there is a loss of all sense of individuality and personality, of all placement in Space or Time or action and law of Nature; there is no longer an ego, a person definite and definable, but only consciousness, only existence, only peace and bliss; one becomes immortality, becomes eternity, becomes infinity. All that is left of the personal soul

is a hymn of peace and freedom and bliss vibrating somewhere in the Eternal.

When there is an insufficient purity in the mental being, the release appears at first to be partial and temporary; the Jiva seems to descend again into the egoistic life and the higher consciousness to be withdrawn from him. In reality, what happens is that a cloud or veil intervenes between the lower nature and the higher consciousness and the Prakriti resumes for a time its old habit of working under the pressure but not always with a knowledge or present memory of that high experience. What works in it then is a ghost of the old ego supporting a mechanical repetition of the old habits upon the remnants of confusion and impurity still left in the system. The cloud intervenes and disappears, the rhythm of ascent and descent renews itself until the impurity has been worked out. This period of alternations may easily be long in the integral Yoga; for there an entire perfection of the system is required; it must be capable at all times and in all conditions and all circumstances, whether of action or inaction, of admitting and then living in the consciousness of the supreme Truth. Nor is it enough for the sadhaka to have the utter realisation only in the trance of Samadhi or in a motionless quietude, but he must in trance or in waking, in passive reflection or energy of action be able to remain in the constant Samadhi of the firmly founded Brahmic consciousness.[1] But if or when our conscious being has become sufficiently pure and clear, then there is a firm station in the higher consciousness. The impersonalised Jiva, one with the universal or possessed by the Transcendent, lives high-seated above[2] and looks down undisturbed at whatever remnants of the old working of Nature may revisit the system. He cannot be moved by the workings of the three modes of Prakriti in his lower being, nor can he be shaken from his station by the attacks even of grief and suffering. And finally, there being no veil between, the higher peace overpowers the lower disturbance and mobility. There is a settled silence in which the soul can take sovereign possession of itself above and below and altogether.

Such possession is not indeed the aim of the traditional Yoga of knowledge whose object is rather to get away from the above and the below and the all into the indefinable Absolute. But whatever the aim, the path of knowledge must lead to one first result, an absolute quietude; for unless

[1] Gita

[2] *Udāsina*, the word for the spiritual "indifference", that is to say the unattached freedom of the soul touched by the supreme knowledge.

the old action of Nature in us be entirely quieted, it is difficult if not impossible to found either any true soul-status or any divine activity. Our nature acts on a basis of confusion and restless compulsion to action, the Divine acts freely out of a fathomless calm. Into that abyss of tranquility we must plunge and become that, if we are to annul the hold of this lower nature upon the soul. Therefore the universalised Jiva first ascends into the Silence; it becomes vast, tranquil, actionless. What action takes place, whether of body and these organs or any working whatever, the Jiva sees but does not take part in, authorise or in any way associate itself with it. There is action, but no personal actor, no bondage, no responsibility. If personal action is needed, then the Jiva has to keep or recover what has been called the form of the ego, a sort of mental image of an "I" that is the knower, devotee, servant or instrument, but an image only and not a reality. If even that is not there, still action can continue by the mere continued force of Prakriti, without any personal actor, without indeed their being any sense of an actor at all; for the Self into which the Jiva has cast its being is the actionless, the fathomless still. The path of works leads to the realisation of the Lord, but here even the Lord is not known; there is only the silent Self and Prakriti doing her works, even, as it seems at first, not with truly living entities but with names and forms existing in the Self but which the Self does not admit as real. The soul may go even beyond this realisation; it may either rise to the Brahman on the other side of all idea of Self as a Void of everything that is here, a Void of unnameable peace and extinction of all, even of the Sat, even of that Existent which is the impersonal basis of individual or universal personality; or else it may unite with it as an ineffable "That" of which nothing can be said; for the universe and all that is does not even exist in That, but appears to the mind as a dream more unsubstantial than any dream ever seen or imagined, so that even the word dream seems too positive a thing to express its entire unreality. These experiences are the foundation of that lofty Illusionism which takes such firm hold of the human mind in its highest overleapings of itself.

These ideas of dream and illusion are simply results in our still existent mentality of the new poise of the Jiva and its denial of the claim made upon it by its old mental associations and view of life and existence. In reality, the Prakriti does not act for itself or by its own motion, but with the Self as lord; for out of that Silence wells all this action, that apparent Void looses out as if into movement all these infinite riches of experiences. To this realisation the sadhak of the integral Yoga must arrive by the process

that we shall hereafter describe. What then, when he so resumes his hold upon the universe and views no longer himself in the world but the cosmos in himself, will be the position of the Jiva or what will fill in his new consciousness the part of the ego-sense? There will be no ego-sense even if there is a sort of individualisation for the purposes of the play of universal consciousness in an individual mind and frame; and for this reason that all will be unforgettably the One and every Person or Purusha will be to him the One in many forms or rather in many aspects and poises, Brahman acting upon Brahman, one Nara-Narayana[3] everywhere. In that larger play of the Divine the joy of the relations of divine love also is possible without the lapse into the ego-sense,—just as the supreme state of human love likewise is described as the unity of one soul in two bodies. The ego-sense is not indispensable to the world-play in which it is so active and so falsifies the truth of things; the truth is always the One at work on itself, at play with itself, infinite in unity, infinite in multiplicity. When the individualised consciousness rises to and lives in that truth of the cosmic play, then even in full action, even in possession of the lower being the Jiva remains still one with the Lord, and there is no bondage and no delusion. He is in possession of Self and released from the ego.

SRI AUROBINDO

[3] The Divine, Narayana, making itself one with humanity even as the human, Nara becomes one with the Divine.

# SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO PHILOSOPHY*

I FEEL on this occasion that I am on a pilgrimage to Baroda. That is what I had said when I had occasion to speak to the Calcutta University in 1952 when the worthy President of this Session was in the chair for two days. Calcutta being the birth-place and the field of Sri Aurobindo's political activity was a place of pilgrimage and so is Baroda. It is here that he spent nearly thirteen years of his life from 1893 to 1905 from the age of 21 to 33. Those were the formative years, and also creative. His poetic genius began to flower, and beginnings of his yogic life and nationalism came to him. The poet, the patriot, the philosopher, the seer in him began to develop here. During that period he taught here at this very college. When I think of him I find a great and silent personality unaustentatiously doing his work solid and mighty work,—for humanity. A retiring personality, reticent almost to the point of shyness, here was a giant intellect, cosmic in its synthetic sweep, keen in penetrating power, quick and firm in its grasp of the essentials. A mighty and loving heart that could sacrifice all on the altar of Truth—as he knew it,—one who had no "Self" left in him almost from his young age. As a professor he was the idol of the students. When he came here from Surat in 1907, after attending the historic Session of the Congress, the students unyoked the horses and drew his carriage to his residence. I still remember how ardent nationalists—young and old—waited impatiently for the fiery issues of the "Bande Mataram" to drink the intoxicating philosophy of nationalism which the paper gave from week to week, from day to day. It was that which gave the intellectual and spiritual background to our political life. People used to go to the Post-office to take the issues of the "Bande Mataram" and clusters used to form round its issues in the street corners and on the roads. Sjt. K. M. Munshi; Mr. Nickte; Mr. C. J. Sutaria; Dadubhai Desai; Sjt. Purani were among his students. It is, therefore, meet that this Philosophical Congress now held at Baroda should remember him and remind the Congress of the contribution that he has given to life and also to philosophy.

* Address delivered on 29-12-1953 at the 28th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Baroda.

It is his intense sincerity to sacrifice everything for the Truth—that distinguishes him from many other thinkers. The first truth that claimed him was the truth of Indian National Movement, the truth of freedom of the motherland. The second truth that claimed him as his own is the essential divinity of man. Having passed through a long and arduous period of Spiritual development he reiterates it to the present world with convincing logic. It is upon that eternal truth of the essential divinity of man that Indian Culture is based. It is true, that other cultures had sometimes during their growth the same idea but no other culture has created complex systems of metaphysical thought round this essential divinity of man and placed it constantly before itself as a practical objective for the individual and collective life of man throughout its history. A philosophy of humanity, or of man, can only be based upon this great truth of man's essential divinity. Sri Aurobindo shows that the attainment of this essential divinity, which is at present covered up in man, is not only a logical necessity of the process of growth or evolution from apparent inconscience to consciousness, but is an inevitability.

A short sketch of his life would not be out of place here. His father, Dr. K.D. Ghose was an anglicized Indian and wanted all his children to be brought up as Englishmen. He took three of his sons, including Sri Aurobindo, aged seven, to England. Sri Aurobindo remained in Manchester till he was about 11 or 12 and then went to London and joined St. Paul's High School and distinguished himself in the study of languages, particularly Latin and Greek. Life in London was hard as remittances from India had become irregular. He left St Pauls' with a Scholarship and went to Cambridge for his Tripos and continued his studies for the I.C.S., unaided. He passed his Tripos Examination but did not care to take the degree and he did not want to join the I.C.S. and yet he could not tell his father who had been wanting him to join the highest Service under the British in India. So, he absented himself from the riding test—even though he had secured record marks in the Language-group in the written papers. The reason was that he had joined the Indian Majlis at Cambridge, an Association of Indian Students of which Mr. Hari Singh Gaur, K. G. Deshpande and others were members, in which he strongly advocated political freedom for India. Late Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar was in London at that time and he took him up in State Service.

He was in Baroda from 1893 to 1906. During these years he studied Indian Culture, increased his knowledge of Indian languages, wrote poetry and political articles in the "Induprakash" of Bombay criticising the moderate

policy of the Congress of those days. His interest in politics, literature and Yoga was very practical. During his visits to Bengal in vacations he studied the political atmosphere and created revolutionary groups of youngmen in five or six districts of Bengal.

In 1906 he resigned his service of the Baroda State to devote himself entirely to the cause of Indian freedom and national education. Charged with complicity in the famous Alipore Bomb Case he was detained during trial in jail where he resumed his practice of Yoga which was interrupted by the whirlwind of political activity. The "Bande Mataram", edited by him gave to the Nationalist movement in India the intellectual basis which turned the course of political thought and action in India. It was during his temporary detention that he realised the basic truth of Yoga,—the experience of the Omnipresent Reality came to him in jail and he spoke about it in the famous Uttarpara-speech in 1909 when he was acquitted. You can read in his own words the description of his experience. After that his life underwent a radical change. He devoted himself to the working out of the experiences of the Omnipresent Reality in life and gave to mankind a rationale of its destiny in his masterpiece—'The Life Divine'.

It was during his stay in Pondicherry from 1914-20 that he conducted a monthly philosophical review called the "Arya". The object of the magazine was to give to mankind a "grand synthesis of human knowledge".

Our president in his address has pleaded for a synthesis today. May I humbly suggest to him and to this Congress that such a synthesis already exists, given by one who had assimilated Western Culture in his young age and later dived deep into the profundities of Eastern Culture? It is not merely in the field of philosophical thought that he has made an epoch-making contribution,—in sociology, in psychology, to International political Unity and in creative arts—in all the important branches of human culture this great Spirit working in his spiritual laboratory has worked out sound principles and laid down lines along which man's problems—individual and collective—could be solved. It is not a small, one-sided thought-structure that he has given, it is not a mere philosophy that he has brought to mankind, it is a spiritual Power which he has made available to man to help him in his upward evolution.

Therefore, I consider it a good sign that Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision is slowly but steadily gaining ground all over the world. His gospel of "Divine Life on Earth for man" promises to become the basis of human philosophy. I have only recently returned from a tour of East and Central

Africa where I was invited by the Tagore-Gandhi Lecture Trust to speak on Sri Aurobindo. I am glad to state that interest in Sri Aurobindo has been awakened and may abide.

Secondly, many Indian and foreign Universities have included some of his works in their post-graduate studies. It is expected that attention of the philosophic world will turn to the study of his philosophy. Now that Indian Philosophy is coming to its own, is it too much to expect that his works would find a place in all important branches of philosophical studies?

In this respect the U.S.A. are to be congratulated on their snatching the initiative from India. Whereas in no university in India is there a chair for the exclusive study of Sri Aurobindo, at the University of Stanford in California there is already a chair for Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Dr. Haridas Choudhury of Calcutta is already engaged for two years on that work. The University of Syracuse in America is also taking keen interest in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Is it not time that we in free India stir a little and do the needful to popularise the knowledge of our contemporary Masters amongst our young students?

Another good sign is the fact that four or five theses for the doctorate degree have been successfully attempted based on Sri Aurobindo's works. It clearly shows that Sri Aurobindo's thought-structure offers very fruitful ground for further thought and stimulates original work.

I am glad to find that Sri Aurobindo has come to stay in the field of world-philosophy. Though Sri Aurobindo himself stated that he was not a philosopher, he did affirm that what he had formulated in his writings was his experience of the Reality. That experience, or rather that world of experience, is rationally explicable. In fact, it is not only a logical necessity, but the inevitable culmination of the process of growth from the Inconscient to the supreme, supraconscient Reality. It is the bringing down of that world of spiritual Reality which would solve the pressing problem of the integration of man's personality and its reconstitution and the resolution of conflicts of man's Collective life.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo's whole contribution rests upon the basis that experience is the test of Reality. The basis of all experience is "Consciousness". Consciousness, therefore, is the fundamental fact of existence. This consciousness is capable of enlarging the field of its experience, it is multi-dimensional. This has been shown in some of the contributions to your Congress by Professors. Consciousness is capable of a horizontal extension, an inward expansion, circumconscience and intra-conscience,—of upward

or vertical ascent, and on each plane it can open out to us a world of experience.

Perhaps I would do well to draw the attention of the philosophers to the special contribution which Sri Aurobindo has made to the world of contemporary thought. In fact, he has not brought mere "thought" to man. A spiritual power, a new and higher level of consciousness, the dynamic Divine Consciousness has been made available to man by him. But this is not the occasion to speak about it.

According to Sri Aurobindo, this Universe is the expression of an Omnipresent Reality. It is a living universe, it is pulsating with consciousness. The universal energy seems to start, to our sense experience and to our intelligence, from an apparent Inconscience. I say "apparent" because if it was real then "Consciousness" could not have grown out of it. 'Being cannot result from "Non-being" "*Na Asato Vidyaté bhāvo*".—Something cannot come out of Nothing. The apparent Inconscience is only a mask, a veil which the Omnipresent Reality has put on. It is That which must have involved in the Inconscient to make this universal existence and evolution possible

There is the other well-known stand of the materialist who bases everything on Matter. But as Madame, the Vice-Chancellor, pointed out in her welcome address even the scientist who deals exclusively with matter, is today, unable to tell us what matter is.

There is no time to go into the whole of Sri Aurobindo's Vision because it is so vast and cosmic. I shall therefore confine myself to three or four aspects in which he has made unique contribution to thought. First, his interpretation of the process of growth, which is generally known as evolution. Second, his explanation of origin of Ignorance. Third, his contribution to psychology—especially the organisation of the whole human psychology from the sub-conscient to the superconscient. Fourth, his new outlook on logic and fifth, his unique conception of transformation of Nature.

(*To continue*)

A. B. Purani

# THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

IN his convocation address at the Patna University, Sardar Panikkar appealed to the students "to have a proper perspective of Indian civilisation." It was a stirring and timely appeal. "It is is not the glories of Nalanda," said he, "the mural paintings of Ajanta or the haunting beauty of Tajmahal or even the great literary works or the philosophical systems of the past that exclusively constitute our civilisation. The new civilisation that is developing around us, the new vision which is rising before us should also move us to enthusiasm."

It is, indeed, high time we set about developing the proper perspective and taking stock of the "new vision of India that is rising before us." But what is the proper perspective, and what is the new vision?

I hope Sardar Panikkar will agree with me in holding that every living nation has a soul in it and that its culture is not a mere complex of traits, traditions and habits, but a progressive life-expression of that soul. It was the soul of India that broke out into the spiritual splendour of the Vedic and the Upanishadic times; it was the soul of India that created the magnificent religious, ethical and social structures of the Epic age; it was the soul of India that gave birth to the "glories of Nalanda, the mural paintings of Ajanta" and the great philosophical and literary monuments of the later epochs. That soul is not dead today, nor is it modernised in the sense of being westernised. After a somewhat protracted period of weariness and langour in which the age-old values were clouded and confused, it is rising again to affirm the truth it holds within itself and carry forward its historic mission. To realise this national soul, to enter into union and communion with it, and to receive and work out its inspirations in life, is the only way to promote its cultural self-expression in the world.

In order, then, to have a proper perspective of Indian culture and civilisation, we must go straight to the fundamental and immortal aspiration of its soul. That aspiration is an unquenchable thirst for the Infinite and Eternal. It is not a mere intellectual seeking or philosophical curiosity impelling a handful of men towards spiritual knowledge, but a national aspiration and a collective yearning so beautifully voiced by the high-souled Maitreyi of the Upanishads:

"येनाहं नामृता स्याम् किमहं तेन कुर्याम्"

(What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?)

Even in the later ages, when the light of knowledge was obscured and the life-force of the nation seemed to give way under the rude, repeated impacts of alien forces, the ancient aspiration may have burned low in the heart of Indian humanity, but was never extinguished; and it flared up with the very first stirrings of the national awakening. It is significant that the renascence of India was marked primarily and predominantly by a resurgence of her spirituality, and the patriotic spirit of her people was inspired and nourished by spiritual ideals. Politics, normally a shady game of hypocrisy, duplicity, falsehood and unabashed self-seeking, became a rallying-cry for the cult of Mother worship of which Bankimchandra's Vandemataram was the most impassioned expression. The new age dawned with an intense glow of spiritual idealism and throbbed with an expansive spiritual fervour. And though the first spiritual vision soon faded away and the original inspiration clouded over in the heat and dust of the subsequent struggles, Indian nationalism has always retained something of the first inspiration and been fumbling its way, through whatever awkward moral experiments, to the main springs of Indian spirituality. Even today, behind the fast-moving scenes of the national life, behind the rush and roar of the awakening energies and the tumbling clutter of discarded relics, one can well perceive a slow but steady turning of the national being towards the spiritual splendour which is breaking on its inner horizons and of which Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have been the illustrious harbingers. When the sun of the new, dynamic spirituality rises in all its glory, India will have not only recovered her spiritual heritage in her galvanised life and culture, but she will enrich it by new gains and achievements and make it perfectly creative in the life of all humanity.

It would, therefore, be a great mistake to think that one can develop the right perspective of Indian culture and civilisation merely by taking a wide and comprehensive view of the overt aims and activities of the nation and the ease and flexibility with which it is absorbing the modern tendencies and influences of the world. An intellectual assessment of Indian culture has often led to misleading, if not grotesque conclusions, in spite of the goodwill and sympathy of its historians and expositors. India owes a deep debt of

gratitude to European, particularly German, Indologists who have spared no pains to make her philosophy, literature and cultural past known to the world; but it cannot be denied that it is some of these very Indologists and their docile Indian followers who are responsible for the damaging misrepresentations and gross misjudgements which have sprung from their all too intellectual perspective. To take only one or two examples out of a thousand: Expressing his views on the Upanishads, Gough says that "there is little that is spiritual in all this...". Deussen makes the Gita "a late product of the degeneration of the monistic thought of the Upanishads, belonging to a period of transition from theism to realistic atheism."[1] It is not necessary to expose the fantastic fallacies involved in these cocksure judgements...they are so ridiculously patent. They reflect, not upon the learning and integrity of the Indologists, but upon the fundamental wrongness of their approach and perspective. The Western exponents and historians of Indian religion, philosophy and culture embarked upon their work with their logical reason as the sole judge and arbiter of things mystic and spiritual. It was a well-intentioned but illegitimate presumption, for, the human reason, however developed it may be, is constitutionally incapable of apprehending and knowing suprarational or spiritual realities, just as the infra-rational mind of the animal is constitutionally incapable of understanding the working of the human reason. It was a presumption that gave to the world a distorted and false view of most of the ancient religions and philosophies of the world—a mentalised view and version of experiences that belong to the levels of consciousness far beyond the human mind. The ancient seers knew that the human mind cannot realise the Infinite unless it surpasses itself; and that was why they revealed spiritual truths only to the initiates, those who, by a sustained and rigorous practice of self-discipline, had purified their mind, life and body, and thereby acquired the competence (adhikara) to realise spiritual truths. Intellectual development alone was never regarded as a title to spiritual life. Shraddha (faith), tapas (askesis) and brahmacharya (holiness) were enjoined upon as an indispensable precondition to the development of intuition without which no understanding of spiritual truths is ever possible. In the Upanishads one often comes across instances in which the spiritual preceptor puts off the novice, again and again, if need be, with the injunction to practise further tapas in order to be able to apprehend spiritual truths:

[1] Indian Philosophy by Dr. Radhakrishnan

भूय एव तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्सथ

(Another year do ye dwell in holiness and faith and askesis).

The rationalist mind of the modern man must understand once for all that if it really wants to explore the spiritual truths of existence, the timeless source and essence of what man is and becomes, the meaning and destiny of his life and the laws and principles that govern the world, it has to purify itself and rise to a higher plane of consciousness and into another dimension of being. It can know the Spirit only in the light of the Spirit. And once it stands in that light, it will realise how inept, how pretentiously fanciful, how radically blundering were its dogmatic assertions on spiritual subjects and how pitiful and profound its ignorance of what most vitally concerns man to know in the world. Human standards of values and canons of judgement lose all their validity in the immeasurable domains of the Spirit, which are domains of suprarational realities. It is nothing but childish arrogance on the part of the human reason to presume to pronounce on the truths of Spirit from which, as the Upanishads put it, words return with the mind, unable to attain to It. These truths should be approached, as the ancient seers advised and the spiritual seekers all the world over approach them, with faith and aspiration, humility and holiness and a progressive control over one's desires and attachments—a condition which alone contributes to the development of intuition and an ascent of consciousness.

"The dominant character of the Indian mind which has coloured all its culture and moulded all its thoughts is the spiritual tendency. Spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history. It is mysticism, not in the sense of involving the exercise of any mysterious power, but only as insisting on a discipline of human nature, leading to a realisation of the spiritual. While the sacred scriptures of the Hebrews and the Christians are more religious and ethical, those of the Hindus are more spiritual and contemplative. The one fact of life in India is the Eternal Being of God."[1] The fount and central truth of Indian culture is the discovery and experience of the Infinite and Eternal. In spite of the lapses and aberrations, the clogging and cramping of the national life during the long, eventful course of its history, Indian humanity has never sought anything

[1] Indian Philosophy by Dr. Radhakrishnan

but God. It has sought Him in the depths of its soul, in the beauty and sublimity of Nature and in the rough and tumble of the world, as well as in the ineffable Beyond. It has sought Him through knowledge and love and consecrated service; and it has endeavoured to cast its whole life in the mould of a sacrament. Where in the whole world has the ideal of a householder's life been pitched so high and such a rigorous demand made upon him to conform to it?

"ब्रह्मनिष्ठो गृहस्थः स्यात् ब्रह्मज्ञानपरायणः, यद् यत् कर्म प्रकुर्वीत तद्ब्रह्मणि समर्पयेत्।"

> (The householder should be devoted to the Brahman and consecrated to a knowledge of It. Each action, each movement of his nature he must offer to the Brahman.)

If "the one fact of life in India is the Eternal Being of God, " and if "spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history", as Dr. Radhakrishnan reminds us—and all truly Indian minds will chime with this view—then it must be admitted that the proper perspective of Indian culture and civilisation, which must needs be a spiritual perspective, can be developed only by a serious pursuit of the spiritual life, the life of sadhana, Yoga. No amount of intellectual breadth and catholicity, no amount of what we call mental enlightenment or moral excellence can ever achieve it. The issue has to be faced squarely, and the central problem of the culture of India, which is also the central problem of every department of Indian life including education, has to be tackled with a perfect combination of insight and foresight—insight into the abiding essence and mission of Indian culture, and foresight of the new possibilities of its development in the future: Is India to progress on the lines laid down by the materialist culture of the West, or on the lines of her own spirit and genius? If India is to conserve and develop her own spirit, she can do it only be by intensifying her spiritual aspiration and steeping her whole life in spirituality. But it must be a wide, all-embracing, dynamic spirituality, not afraid of the struggles of life and avid of the seclusion of the cave and the solitude of the forest, but armed with the power to transform human nature and convert the discords of human life into the creative harmony of a life of divine peace and power and plenitude. Purged of all taint of ascetic escapism, it will accept all life, social, political, commercial, military and intellectual,

in order to illumine it with the light of God and quicken it with God's Force.

Indian culture, I repeat, is essentially a spiritual culture, and the only way to develop the proper perspective of it and make it dynamically great and creative, is to orient the national mind towards an all-inclusive, all-conquering spirituality. A wide, universal spiritual culture, untrammelled by effete orthodoxies and sectarian loyalties—a spiritual culture that seeks nothing but the Divine and His unveiled manifestation and reign upon earth, a spiritual culture that is a synthesis of all the enduring achievements of the past and powerful and plastic enough to meet the challenge of the times—is rising for the redemption of the world. To foster the growth of this spirituality, in oneself and in others; to aspire for union with the Divine; to install Him in individual and collective life as the sovereign Master and Guide; to infuse Matter and the material life with His light and Force, is the supreme call of the soul of India upon all who are devoted to it. Let the intelligentsia of India—for, it is they who still fight shy of spirituality and look down upon it as an outworn obscurantism—go deep into the heart of the nation and try to feel the single aspiration that has kept it alive through all the crises of its chequered life. That aspiration, that yearning has ever been for the Divine, the Infinite and Eternal, the supreme Reality, the omnipresent source, substratum and sustenance of all that exists. In the universal realisation of that aspiration lies the fulfilment of the destiny of India. And the hour has struck for a collective advance towards that realisation.

In the next article I shall deal with what Sardar Panikkar has called the new vision rising before us.

RISHABHCHAND

# THE LIFE DIVINE

*(A Synopsis)*

*(Note: The Synopsis of Chapter I written by Sri Aurobindo himself—and reproduced here—has been taken as the model for this attempt to prepare a summary of "The Life Divine", chapter by chapter.)*

## Volume I

### CHAPTER I

#### The Human Aspiration

Man's highest aspiration has been always a seeking for God, perfection, freedom, an absolute truth and bliss, immortality.

A direct contradiction exists between this aspiration and his present state of mortality, imperfection, bondage to mechanical necessity, ego and animality.

This contradiction between what he is now and what he seeks to be is not a final argument against his aspiration. Contradictions are part of Nature's method; the aspiration may be achievable by individual effort or by an evolutionary progress.

The problems of existence are problems of harmony.

The accordance of an active life-principle with the inanimate Matter containing it is Nature's first evolutionary problem; its complete solution would be immortality in the body.

The accordance of conscious Mind with an unconscious Matter and half-conscious Life is her second evolutionary problem; a direct and perfect instrumentation of knowledge in a living body would be its complete solution.

The accordance of immortal spirit with a mortal mind, life and body is her third and final problem; its complete solution would be the evolution of a divine being and a divine nature.

As Nature has implanted the impulse to life in Matter, to mind in life, so she has implanted in mind the impulse towards the evolution of what is beyond mind, spiritual, supramental. Each impulse justifies itself by the creation of the necessary organs and faculties.

The animal is a laboratory in which she has worked out man; man may be a laboratory in which she wills to work out the superman, the being of a divine nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

## CHAPTER II

### THE TWO NEGATIONS (I) THE MATERIALIST DENIAL

A divine life on earth not only demands our recognition of Spirit as the inhabitant of the body, but also the body as a fit material for this divine consummation.

First we have to perceive that Matter is Divine; and secondly that Matter and Spirit are linked by an ascending series,—from Life to Mind, and from Mind to Supermind; and thirdly that all is a Oneness.

The problem for Thought, as well as for Life, is to find the Oneness, without denying either Matter or Spirit. To reach this luminous reconciliation the human mind must proceed partly by objective analysis, but more directly through subjective synthesis, in order to arrive at the ultimate unity of Matter, Life, Mind and Spirit.

Mind's natural way is to test the assertion of each of these terms separately. But the pitfall here is that it eventually comes to rest (for a time at least) at one or other of the extremes,—declaring that either Matter or Spirit is the ultimate Real. Thus an exclusive regard of one results in the negation of the other. This has been the divided condition of man's knowledge in the recent past, where an exclusive materialism has held sway in the West, while a life-negating spiritism dominated the East.

To perceive the real source of identity of Spirit and Matter, mind must either go beyond itself, or widen sufficiently to embrace that Oneness. To reach this comprehensive affirmation must be the combined effort of both East and West.

In the West materialism has been the training ground of the intellect towards a clarity and purity of thought. But the materialist must be prepared to enlarge his experience beyond the range of the senses. With his

feet firmly planted in the material reality he can extend more firmly and surely to a higher (and even highest) pinnacle of knowledge.

All negations ultimately lead to an apparent Unknowable, the knowledge of which is only attainable by a supreme effort of Consciousness. To see Life-in-itself beyond the knowledge of Matter, Mind-in-itself and Supermind-in-itself, not limited by the materialistic formula, are the steps of a higher Knowledge. And Science is opening the gateway to it.

All possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity. All knowledge is rooted in Oneness, because Existence itself has its origin in Oneness, and similarly all forms of Energy—whether Mind, Life or Matter —are one.

The Oneness is the All, and the oneness is in All. It is inwardly the God in man, and outwardly the multitudinous Unity; and both are aspects of the supreme Divine. Ultimately the inner must widen to embrace the outer, in order to realise that greater Oneness of Cosmos.

## CHAPTER III

### The Two Negations. (2) The Refusal of the Ascetic.

Yet there is a greater all-embracing Oneness beyond the cosmic Unity. This is the pure Transcendent Spirit.

The subtle senses are but channels open to man for gaining contact with the supraphysical realities, the worlds beyond the material universe. But the worlds themselves are only forms, the senses only instruments: Consciousness is the great underlying factor, the universal witness. For the universe has no independent reality, but exists in and for the Consciousness that observes.

Materialism is based on an ultimate unreality of life, and likewise spiritual monism leads to the unreality and purposelessness of human existence. The dilemma can only be solved by an extension of our field of consciousness, an inner enlargement from the individual into the cosmic existence, our attaining the Cosmic Consciousness itself.

Entering into the Cosmic consciousness we become aware of Matter, Life and Mind as strands of one existence, and further of Supermind as the key to all lesser activities. In that higher experience we perceive that the world is a Conscious Energy, and that this Energy is one with the Being that creates it. Yet this conscious Being is more than the universe, and lives independently in its own inexpressible infinity, as well as in the cosmic

harmonies. We can enter into this world-transcending Consciousness, and become superior to all cosmic existence.

This is the transcendent Silence, the inactive Brahman of the Vedantic Monists. But what relation has that vaster Beyond to this universe? The ancient Indian Upanishads perceived the highest Truth, the true Oneness of that Transcendent Beyond with Cosmic existence. It was later that Indian thought saw only that Beyond as the sole Reality, and hence Cosmos as an illusion. Thus arose in Eastern thought the refusal of the ascetic, the recoil from matter, and the quest for Nirvana, the call of the Spirit, as the ultimate goal of worldly life

## CHAPTER IV

### Reality Omnipresent

It is only by achieving the most intimate oneness of the inner life of the individual with his outer existence, that one can realise the truth of Spirit and at the same time accept Matter as well as Life and Thought, as the condition of Spirit's manifestation.

In the Cosmic Consciousness we find a meeting-place where Matter becomes real to Spirit, and Spirit becomes real to Matter. And likewise the intermediaries of Life and Mind become continuous links of one Reality. Matter here reveals itself as the body of Spirit, and Spirit, or soul, as the essence of Matter; and Mind and Life are discovered to be the figures and instruments of the supreme Conscious Being. Mind thence fulfills itself when it becomes a mirror of the Truth of Being, and Life when it consciously lends its energies to the perfect self-figuration of the Divine in the universal existence.

In the Transcendent Consciousness, which is the basis of Existence, we can ultimately realise also the reconciliation of Spirit and Matter. Cosmos and That which transcends Cosmos are but two aspects of the One. The Transcendence is the eternal passivity which makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems.

The basis and support of man's action likewise must be the realisation of that calm passivity within himself. And on that basis a wider comprehensive consciousness must embrace both the Silence and the world existence.

When we speak of Non-Being we do not mean a Nothingness or Nihil as the ultimate goal. This term in itself is an indication of an indefinable Something that is beyond Time, and existence in Time. Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence. And we call Non-Being the contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence. To the awakened human soul both are the same Reality; for the completely conscious soul reaches back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without losing its hold on Existence and the universe.

An omnipresent Reality—here and beyond—is the truth of the Supreme, Who is the All. The highest experience of this Reality, in and beyond the universe, shows it to be a conscious Existence, a supreme Intelligence and Force, and a self-existent Bliss. This Truth must be the basis—first in faith and then experience—of our higher ascent into Knowledge.

## CHAPTER V

### The Destiny of The Individual

The Supreme Reality is One and Omnipresent. It is a Unity that cannot be conceived by mind, except through an infinite series of conceptions and experiences, and not through one exclusive aspect. For what the mind calls the Unknowable, appears in many forms of Consciousness.

The ancient Vedantic Seers not only saw the positive aspect of infinite Being or Sat, but also the ineffable Beyond or Asat (translated as Non-Being). The Upanishads beheld that Sat and Asat are the highest dual conception, by mind, of a Reality that is One. From this original division of the One has arisen the creation of the Many or the Multiplicity. It was only later thought that erred from the Upanishadic vision, in attempting to seek the purity of the One by denying the complexity of the Many.

A widening conception of the cosmic Reality in modern thought leads us to see that there is an ascending movement in Creation, through which Matter is passing into Life, and Life into mental consciousness. It is this mental consciousness, through man, where lies the possibility of a higher consciousness becoming manifest in Matter, Life and Mind. It is an integral development; for we do not renounce physical life in reaching the mental life, nor do we reject the mental and physical in our attraction for the spiritual.

This integral development demands also our correct view of Life and the relation between the three forms of consciousness,—the individual, the universal, and the transcendent or supra-cosmic. From this point of view, the individual is one concentrated centre of the universal consciousness, just as the universe is a form inhabited by the immanence of the Formless.

The continuation or survival of the illumined individual is necessary in the action of the world; for the conscious manifestation of the Transcendent (that which Beyond), in the individual is the means by which the collectivity or universality becomes conscious of itself.

First we have to see that the Transcendent is absolute and free in Itself, beyond Time and Space and beyond the polarities of finite and infinite. Yet the Supracosmic is not limited by this transcendence, but has objectivised itself into the multiplicity of forms in Cosmos. There it has established the three conditions of the subconscient, the conscient and the superconscient, in an upward ascending series starting with a subconscious unity. The conscient,—the middle stage,—is centralised in the individual ego, which hence represents man's present imperfect individualised personality.

The transcendence of the ego-consciousness brings about the liberation of the individual soul. The liberated soul may be regarded as a point of light which attracts and instigates other soul awakenings in the world. It is by the individual's ascent to Divine Knowledge, and at the same time his extension into the multiplicity that he becomes a luminous centre of the Divine in humanity.

(*To continue*)

NATHANIEL PEARSON

# THE HUMAN CYCLE

*(An Abridgement)*

## CHAPTER IV

### The Discovery of the Nation-Soul

THE primal law and purpose of the individual life, as of society, is to seek its own development, with only this difference that the group-soul is more complex. Its first definite self-consciousness is objective much more than subjective—as the ordinary emotional conception of the nation which centres round its geographical aspect shows—and so far as it is subjective it is apt to be superficial and vague. It is the objective view of society that has been prominent almost everywhere, and history has been the record of the operations and influences of political and economic motives. Religion, if anything, ought to be subjective, yet religious history has been almost entirely, except in the time of the founders and their immediate successors, an insistence on things objective, rites, ceremonies, authority, dogma, forms of belief. But now we have the new psychological tendency of the communal consciousness. This though at first mostly confined to political consciousness and in nations struggling under subjection and defeat, may be taken as the sign and precursor of a general change in humanity. The right "to be ourselves" is established, in spite of the repetition of the Teutonic lapse of living solely for and to oneself. Germany preparing for the subjective stage had a vision unfortunately intellectual than illuminated. The last result—the war, the collapse, the reaction towards the Nazi state—may look discouraging, a clear warning to abandon that path. But the misuse of great powers is no argument against their right use. We have all to do the same thing which Germany has attempted, but to take care not to do it likewise, mistaking the vital ego for Self. For there is a false as well as a true subjectivism, the distinction must be clearly grasped if the road of this stage of social evolution is to be made safe for the human race.

## CHAPTER V

### True and False Subjectivism

The subjective stage of human development is a step towards self-knowledge and towards living in and from the self. Everything depends on how that step is taken. A psychical self-knowledge tells us that there are in our being many frontal, apparent selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error, root of all others. If we look at the new attempts of nations, and especially of the subjective German nationality, we shall see the starting-point of these possible errors. The first danger arises from the fact of the subjective age arising out of the individualistic: there is no gain if we only repeat the old errors in new terms, substitute communal egoism for individualistic egoism. For this is what a true subjectivism teaches us—both with regard to the individual and the nation—first, that we are a higher self than our ego, secondly, that we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others. From this first error of German subjectivism followed others: the subjection of the individual to the nation, rather the State. And since in relation to other States, the effective law is still that of war, war then is the whole business of the State. Finally, since the survival of the best is the highest good, the conquest of the world by German culture is the straight path of human progress. This is, however, not to suggest that all Germany thought in this fashion, what Germany has done is to systematise certain strong actual tendencies and principles present in all 'civilized' countries of the West. From our point of view it is well that terrible examples of the utmost logic of these should have been forced on the attention of mankind, for the choice of good and evil instead of a halting between the two will be forced on the human conscience. The whole root of the German error lies in its mistaking life and body for the Self, while the true individuality of man and nation lies in a Self one in difference which relates the good of each, on a footing of equality and not of strife and domination, to the good of the rest of the world.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Objective and Subjective Views of Life

The principle of individualism is the liberty of the human being as well as in the nation to manage its affairs freely, or if it wills, to mismanage them

freely so long as it does not interfere with the rights and liberties of others. In both eventualities social and international laws act as checks. Modern Science has meanwhile created new ideas and tendencies, on one side exaggerated individualism, on the other the quite opposite ideal of collectivism. But behind this conflict there is striving to arise a new idea of human universalism or collectivism for the race. Subjectivism does not, at first sight, seem to make any difference in the picture. For both subjectivism and objectivism start from the same data: though objectivism proceeding by the analytical reason takes an external and mechanical view of the problem while subjectivism proceeds from within and regards everything from the point of view of a containing and developing self-consciousness. But as objective Science sees a universal force of Nature, we may come subjectively to the realisation of a universal Being or Existence which fulfils itself in the world and the individual and the groups with an impartial regard for all as equal powers of its self-manifestation. This is obviously the self-knowledge which is most likely to be right: in this view neither the separate growth of the individual nor the all-absorbing growth of the group can be the ideal, but an equal, simultaneous and as far as may be, parallel development of both, in which each helps to fulfil the other. The subjective search for the self may lean to identification with the conscious physical life, with the vital being, as happened recently. Beyond it we may get to a subjective idealism. But here also it is possible for subjectivism to go still beyond and discover the true Self as something greater even than the mind. Mind, life and body then become merely an instrument for the increasing expression of this Self in the world, the secret Godhead who is one and yet various in all of us, in every being and existence, thing and creature.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Ideal Law of Social Development

The subjective periods of human development are the most fruitful and creative because they make clear to us not only what man has become in the past but what he might be in the future. Existence is an illimitable Reality expressing itself in the multiple values of life. Life begins with matter, and is fixed in type, as it develops there is an increase in the power of variation. Man's individuality is his distinction, by this he understands the law of his being and development and in the end to go beyond himself.

To do this is the destiny of man and the object of his individual and social existence. This is done primarily through the individual man; for this end man has become an individual soul, that the One may find and manifest Himself in each human being. The object of all society should be, therefore, first to provide conditions of life and growth for individual Man, for all men; secondly, to express in the general life of mankind the power, joy and beauty of the Spirit that has been attained. Freedom and harmony express the two necessary principles of variation and oneness, conditions of healthy progression and successful arrival. The individual will arrive at his possible perfection by a growth from within. It cannot be done brutally, heavily, mechanically. The liberty claimed by the human mind for the individual is no mere egoistic challenge and revolt, it is the primary condition for its self-unfoldment. But individual man belongs not only to humanity, but also to his race type, class type, his mental, vital, physical, spiritual type in which he resembles some, differs from others. It is by working through his group that he enriches his society, that is, the nation. The community stands as a mid-term between the individual and humanity, and it has, like the individual, the right to be itself as against any attempt at domination, uniformity or regimentation. This does not mean that it will refuse contact and interchange with the rest of the world.

Thus the law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and be aided by the same free development in others. It is the same with the community or the nation, working towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family. Naturally, this is an ideal law which the imperfect race has never attained. Still it is the very business of a subjective age to hold it before him and find out gradually the way by which it can become more and more the moulding principle of his individual and social existence.

(*To continue*)

SISIR KUMAR GHOSE

## REVIEW

**The Bhagavad Gita and the Changing World.** *By P. Nagaraja Rao M.A., D. Litt.* Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Ahmedabad. Price Rs. 5/-only.

The ideal of a spiritual divine life on the earth is neither impracticable nor even such a distant dream as some people imagine. Sri Aurobindo uttered these prophetic words in the last chapter added as a sort of postscript to his great book, The Life Divine, which had first appeared in the Arya during the great crisis of the modern world, the first World War: "What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature." That tension has increased immensely and the book under review is one of many signs of the trend envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The very title of the book is poignantly significant. If human civilisation is to survive, there must be some sort of unification of the human race eliminating world-shaking upheavals, and that unification requires a spiritual basis, a spiritual view of life which all mankind can accept. The author asserts that the Gita does supply such a basis and he calls it, The World Scripture. To establish this claim he has quoted the opinions of many eminent people, ancient and modern from all over the world. Thus he says: "The greatness and the efficacy of the Gita is mentioned in some of the Puranas like Varaha, Skanda and Padma. In Bana's Kadambari (seventh century) men attained great happiness by the recitation of the Gita. In Kalhana's Rajatarangini it is recorded that King Avantivarman had the Gita read to him in his last hours ....The Gita form has great fascination for the minds of men. Buddhists and Jains are influenced by the Gita. From Alburni's Indica where the Gita is quoted about twenty times we gather that this muslim writer was fascinated by the Gita and perhaps it was he who first introduced it to the muslim world. Later Abul Fazl and Faizi rendered it into prose and verse in Persian."

The Gita is the first Sanskrit work to be translated into English (1785). Coming to modern writers he quotes Aldous Huxley, the European neo-Brahmin as saying "that the Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value, not only for Indians but for all mankind." Adapting the words of Whitehead, the author declares that most of the religious scriptures of the world are a series of footnotes to the Gita. He could have added that the Gita is not only appreciated everywhere, it is actually helping people to remould themselves in the modern world. Thus in a book recently published, *Germany Reborn*, Sj. Chamanlal writes: "They (the Germans) are not much worried about war, because they practically believe in the Gita which we Hindus only read but do not practise. The Gita says life is immortal and our job is not to worry about life and death but to do our duty and leave the results in the hands of God. The Germans are following this philosophy today. They are working hard and very hard."

In the opening chapter of the book, the author gives a graphic description of the plight of the modern man. The Irish Poet W. B. Yeats, aptly describes the contemporary mood:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned,
> The best lack all conviction, the worst are full of passionate intensity.

This intellectual confusion has resulted in tragic consequences. The average man loses his faith in any set ideal or creed. Creedless life knows no code of conduct except that of self-expression which, to use the phrase of Arnold, is 'doing as we please,' a characteristic of the barbarian. The prevailing temper of the world is described vividly by T. S. Eliot in his *Waste Land*. A mere superficial type of intellectual life results in cynicism. Cynicism is an intellectual creed which finds excuse for doing nothing, and contemplating all creeds, adhering to none. This description of the modern plight is true enough, but the book does not show how it has come and, what is more important, how it can be remedied. It of course declares the Gita as the saving light, but this claim, as we shall soon see, has not been well established. Towards the end of the 18th century the modern world was losing faith in religion, all sorts of tyranny and superstition were supported in the name

of religion and it really stood in the way of human progress. The rise of modern science helped the anti-religious tendency. But people found a new creed to support them—the religion of humanity. "The fundamental idea is that mankind is the godhead to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief aim of the human spirit." "Humanitarianism has been its most prominent emotional result. Philanthropy, social service and other kindred activities have been its outward expression of good works. Democracy, socialism, pacifism are to a great extent its by-products or at least owe much of their vigour to its inner presence." (The Ideal of Human Unity). This religion of humanity brought forward by the rationalists of the 18th century as a substitute for the formal spiritualism of ecclesiastical Christianity exercised a great influence and ameliorated the condition of mankind to such an extent that it seemed that in course of time it would remove all human ills and bring about an ideal order of society. But the first world war shattered all these hopes, the unparalleled massacre continued for years made men lose faith in all standards and values. Why could not the religion of humanity prevent this asuric carnage? Sri Aurobindo discussed this very question in the last year of the war and gave the answer for all time. "In order to accomplish all its future this idea and religion of humanity has to make itself more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative. For otherwise it can only work with clarity in the minds of the few and with the mass it will be only a modifying influence, but will not be the rule of human life. And so long as that is so, it cannot entirely prevail over its own principal enemy. That enemy, the enemy of all real religion, is human egoism, the egoism of the individual, the egoism of class and nation. These it could for a time soften, modify, force to curb their own arrogant, open and more brutal expressions, oblige to adopt better institutions, but not to give place to the love of mankind, not to recognise a real unity between man and man. For that essentially must be the aim of the religion of humanity, as it must be the earthly aim of all human religion, love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling and life, the ideal which was expressed first some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn and must always remain the highest injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth." It is this eternal message of the Spirit which is the central teaching of the Gita[1] and it has put it in such a way as to bring it home to

[1] The message of the Gita is the gospel of the Divinity in man—Sri Aurobindo.

the modern mind; that is the real claim of the Gita to be the universal Scripture, and not because it gives nice moral rules as our author asserts. A moral code, however high, gives only certain external rules of conduct. Humanity has lost faith in these rules, so if the Gita cannot give us anything more than that, the modern world has no use of it. But morality has only a secondary place in the Gita, as indeed in all Yoga Shastra. The real aim is to find the Spirit within and to live and act always in direct union with it. The Gita sums up all this in one sloka: "The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings, however and in all ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me." (6-31). A religion of humanity based on this spiritual realisation is the hope of the future of mankind.

Two things are standing in the way of the acceptance of this fundamental spiritual truth, Marxism and Psycho-analysis, which often act together. Physical science, from which these two things originated, is no longer anti-religious or anti-spiritual. Science in the twentieth century admits that it has no means of testing spiritual truths and therefore cannot pass any judgment on them, while many eminent scientists personally admit that a spiritual view of the world as distinguished from the material is the most acceptable to the highest human reason. Sir Arthur Eddington, says our author, clinches the issue when he argues: "What is the truth about ourselves? We may incline to various answers. We are a bit of a star gone wrong. We are complicated physical machinery-puppets that strut and talk and laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath. But, let us remember that there is one elementary inseparable answer. We are *that which asks the questions*." Thus consciousness is the ultimate truth and not matter, and the physical forces are only modes and ways in which that consciousness takes cognisance of the world. Lord Kelvin writes, "We are absolutely forced by science to admit and to believe with absolute confidence in a directive power—in an influence other than physical, dynamical and electrical forces." Marx and Engels also admitted that the spiritual view of the world cannot be refuted by reasoning; but as it is practically found that a belief in a God and religion is detrimental to the well-being of mankind and that a rejection of it paves the way to that well-being, a materialistic view must be accepted. Marx ignores the boons which religion has conferred on humanity; indeed religion has inspired all the higher tendencies of men and raised man above the level of animals; civilisation and culture have their roots in religion. The criticism of religion refers to the abuse and degeneration of religion; all good things in the world have been abused as

men are still living in egoistic ignorance. The Gita refers to such periodical decline in the condition of religion and declares that God incarnates Himself in all crises to restore religion to its purity so that it may lead humanity to its destined goal on the earth, *lokasangrahāya*. It also points out the causes of this deterioration and shows the remedy. The root cause of all deformation of religion is the egoism of man, and the Gita gives a practical discipline how we can get rid of egoism and be established in the truth of the Spirit. On the practical side Marxism has this truth that the physical and vital needs of man must be satisfied; but its radical defect is that it lays all its emphasis on this aspect of human life only, disregarding the soul, which is the very essence of man. Professor Rao describes in detail all the current secular ideologies. He quotes from Lenin's book on religion that "all contemporary religion and churches, and every kind of religious organisation, are organs of bourgeois reaction, serving as a defence of exploitation and a doping of the working class." He quotes from the Communist Manifesto to give an exposition of the 'celebrated' doctrine of the *materialist interpretation* of history. He concludes, "Marxism is the boldest expression of man's need for pleasure and happiness on earth." He has given the views of psycho-analysts in some detail. Thus he says: "The psycho-analysts regard religion as dogma which is not true to facts. They attack religion on two grounds. The first line of attack is scientific and methodological and the second is from the point of utility and the bad effect religion produces. Freud observes that the dogmas of religion have no basis at all. He writes, 'if we ask on what their claim to be believed is based, we receive three answers which accord remarkably ill with one another. They deserve to be believed, because our primal ancestors believed them; secondly, because we possess proofs which have been handed down from the period of antiquity; and thirdly, because it is forbidden to raise the question of their authenticity at all....In other words, religious doctrines are 'illusions'; they do not admit of proof and no one can be compelled to consider them as true or to believe in them." (*The Future of an Illusion*). It is a pity that our author leaves Freud here without giving him a crushing reply. Freud has chosen some ignorant and weak defences of religion to show his psychoanalytic might. Religious truths admit as much of proof as any scientific truth and an ultra-rationalist like Narendra (Vivekananda) was actually compelled by Ramakrishna to admit the existence of God. And what does the author of Psychoanalysis give us as a substitute for the religious illusion? His analysis led him to the conclusion that life was nothing but "a round-

about way to death". In what way is this gloomy view going to help mankind? Indeed it is psycho-analysis which has greatly exaggerated the feeling of frustration in the modern world. The author himself says: Dr. Jung after immense clinical experience for over a period of thirty years and of many hundreds of patients observes: "Among those in the second half of life—that is over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. When the modern physician is confronted with a neurotic patient he sees only too clearly why his patient is ill; it arises from his having no love but only sexuality, no faith because he is afraid to grope in the dark; no hope because he is disillusioned by the world and by life; and no understanding because he has failed to read the meaning of his own existence. What the patient needs is *faith*, *hope*, *love* and *insight*". We have only to add that this graphic description of a neurotic patient applies to the modern *secular* man, and the remedy can be found only in a spiritual view of life which psychoanalysis cannot provide. "I find it difficult," says Sri Aurobindo, "to take these psychoanalysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinise spiritual experiences by the flicker of their torch-lights,—yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscient and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t cat, t-r-e-e tree) is the very heart of real knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights with the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above and not below, *upari budhna esham.* The supérconscient, not the subconscient, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is beside poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing."

About one-third of the book is devoted to an exposition of the secular ideologies, and though the express purpose of the author is to uphold the spiritual view, his presentation of the former is much more clear and forceful

than that of the latter. It is obvious that though he has become somehow inclined to the spiritual ideal he has still a soft corner in his heart for the secular ideologies. He says: "The Gita is opposed to all the secular creeds of our times. It believes in the existence of God as the Creator of the world, in the freedom of man, and the immortality of the soul. The first assumption and the chief tenet of the Gita is the belief in the insufficiency of the human power and human intellect." In support of this latter assumption the author quotes Newton in the footnote. As a matter of fact, the Gita does not stand on "beliefs" and "assumptions", it is based on the highest spiritual realisation and needs no support from modern science or philosophy. Otherwise it would have been only one of the many ideologies current in the modern world and nothing more. Also it does not pit itself against the current secular creeds which indeed were not known at the time of the Gita. But the Gita in a way anticipated these modern creeds, accepted and put in their proper place the elements of truth that there are in each of them, and it is in this that the claim of the Gita to be a universal scripture consists. The author's bias towards secular ideologies becomes quite apparent from the following forceful presentation: "The naturalist philosophers believe that all the difficulties of man are the result of his sophisticated intellect and his interference with the flow of nature and its workings. They plead for a natural and instinctive life and exhort man to live in the light of nature and not according to the dictates of authoritarian creeds. They hold that we can have a sound and natural life only with the disappearance of Gods. Llewelyn Powys in his delightful book *Glory of Life* gives an account of the naturalist creed. He writes: 'the twilight of God is upon us. Its strange ecliptic light is spreading far and wide. We are not today gulled by the creaking of a chamber door or by the thunders out of heaven. Men of science have examined the substance of matter with great precision. Our world is held tight in the clutches of calculable laws as the girders of a bridge'. Powys argues that nature knows and moves in ignorance of our babbling of good and evil. Nature thinks nothing about our chastity....It is sorry improvidence to turn aside from such felicities when opportunity offers. A man's life's capital is invested in his body." Indeed a great majority of the educated section in our country leans towards secularism. In this connection Professor Rao quotes the views of our Prime Minister. He continues: "Both the materialist and the humanist are alike anti-religious and they do not believe that life has any other goal than beautiful and natural living in social harmony. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

sums up the creed, 'essentially I am interested in this world, in this life, not in some other world or a future life. Whether there is such a thing as a soul, or whether there is a survival after death or not, I do not know, and, important as these questions are, they do not trouble me in the least. They are just intellectual speculations in an unknown region about which we know next to nothing. They do not affect my life, and whether they were proved right or wrong subsequently, they would make little difference to me." (*The Discovery of India*). In holding such views, Jawaharlal shows that he is a true representative of a large section of our educated community who have the western outlook. Professor Rao could have quoted also the view of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. In a statement issued in connection with the recent assault on him by the temple priests of Deoghar, he says that the Government should take up the management of such temples and declares: "This is an age of Science. Every faith is being tested on the touchstone of reason. If our society keeps this in view and believes accordingly, everything will go well." Our author also gives this high place to reason, but he is not correct in saying that this is the view of the Gita; if faith has to be tested by reason there will be no faith in the world. Faith is a reflection of the light of our inner being, our soul; it should not be made to stand before the bar of Reason which is an instrument of ignorance and not of knowledge. The Gita says: "Enveloped is knowledge, O Kaunteya, by this eternal enemy of knowledge in the form of desire which is an insatiable fire. The sense, mind and intellect are its seat; enveloping knowledge by these it bewilders the embodied soul." And yet, says Sri Aurobindo, it is within this sense, mind and intellect, this play of the lower nature that you would limit your search for perfection! The effort is vain. In this connection, it would be relevant to quote what Sri Aurobindo said about leadership in India: "There must rise a Party in India who will have to hear the message of the Gita given by the charioteer of Partha. The leaders of India must be followers of the Gita. They will have to rise above the *Gunas*, *gunatita*; only then will come the salvation of India."

The author does not seem to have a clear understanding of the central teaching of the Gita. In one place he says that Karmayoga is the central teaching of the Gita, in another place he says, it is devotion; in another place he declares that the Gita gives three distinct paths, work, devotion, knowledge; yet in another place he says that the Gita makes a synthesis of all three, but does not explain what that synthesis is. The author has collected quotations from different parts of the Gita and arranged them in his own

way side by side with innumerable quotations from western writers, ancient and modern. This is altogether a wrong way of approach, as the Gita moves in a plane higher than the ordinary human reason, and unfolds its teaching considering the different stages of development of the disciple; and what is suitable in one stage is not so in another. The Gita covers the whole ground of spiritual experience and spiritual disciplines and paths and puts each in its proper place. The Gita is not at all a book of other-worldliness and asceticism, the common modern charge against spirituality in general. It agrees with the psycho-analysts in holding the view that it is no use repressing nature. All existences, it says, follow their nature and what will coercing it avail? (3/33). It does not reject the claims of the body and the senses. The Gita, no doubt, teaches self-control and asks us to abjure sin, but shows that even what we call sin and evil has some truth in it which has been deformed, everything in this world, even our desires and passions, have a divine origin. "As for the subjective becomings, *bhavah*, of Nature, which are sattvic, rajasik and tamasic, they are verily from me," says the Lord. (7-12). What is necessary is to purify and transform them and develop the true divine movement; this ideal of a divine life in this body and on the earth is the message of the Gita, for which the Gita gives a practical discipline making a grand synthesis of all Aryan spiritual culture. The author regards the Gita as a religious philosophy, but in fact the Gita is not a book on religion, nor is it mainly a philosophy. Religion is a thing of creed and dogma, and there are many such religions in the world; the Gita accepts the value of all of them as a means of turning the mind of man towards God; but that is only a preliminary discipline as is morality, both of which are constructions of the mind and do not take us very far. The Gita does not regard the distinction of good and evil as something absolute and does not recognise any categorical imperatives or absolute moral laws. The Gita says clearly that a Yogin goes beyond both good and evil, *ubhe sukrite dushkrite*; that does not mean that a yogin freely commits sins; he rises to a higher nature where he has not to live and act according to mental rules or laws, but whatever he does rises spontaneously from a divine nature and is intrinsically true and beautiful. The Gita shows the practical way how to achieve this perfection; thus it is primarily a book of Yoga and Yoga is nothing but practical psychology. As a basis of this spiritual practice, it gives a brief philosophy based on the Upanishads, the original Vedanta, in the framework of which it makes a unique synthesis of all philosophical views. The Gita does not rely on authority, it even says that a man of knowledge goes beyond all the *Vedas*; it

also does not resort to reasoning to establish its truths. But these are real and supreme truths and the Gita puts them in such a way that the human intellect can easily accept them[1] and make them the basis of sadhana by which one will find within himself the final proof and evidence of these truths. But for that a proper exposition of the Gita is necessary suitable to the modern mind and that is what we find preeminently in Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita.*

The author concludes his exposition of the Gita with the following lines about The Ideal Man of the Gita: "He is up against all that is selfish and anti-social and unregenerate. He does not accept any practice however ancient it may be if it goes against the deliverances of the primary maxims of morality and the convictions of the enlightened social conscience of the day. He is with the progressive section of thought, provided it is not anti-spiritual. He combines in himself faith and enthusiasm for the spiritual life." This is an apt description of the author himself, but too far from the ideal man of the Gita. Here the author gives faithfully what the modern western people generally mean when they speak of spirituality,—it is morality and social conscience. To the Gita all moral rules and social ideals, however helpful at a certain stage, are a bondage which the spiritual seeker must abandon, *sarvadharmān parityajya.* As an introduction to this teaching, the Gita starts with the bankruptcy of Arjuna who was a highly social and moral man. The social conscience is a very elastic thing and differs in different ages and countries. According to the enlightened social conscience of a large section of the Hindus, even today, the caste system and untouchability are categorical imperatives. Indeed Arjuna cited enlightened social and moral rules to justify his refusal to perform his god-given task, and Krishna began his enlightenment with a sharp rebuke to him, "Thou grievest for those that should not be grieved for, yet speakest words of wisdom".

We have no space to consider all the inaccuracies of the author, they are the common errors committed in the current interpretations of the Gita. For a masterly exposition of the spiritual ideal as compared with the current secular ideologies which are standing in the way of the spiritual regeneration of mankind, we refer the reader to the last chapter of *The LifeDivine* to which we referred at the very beginning. Here we shall quote only one paragraph from that chapter: "For this ideal, this conscious stress on the material and economic life was in fact a civilised reversion to the first state of man,

[1] Indeed Arjuna, while hearing those truths, is prompted to say, "All this Thou sayst my mind holds for the truth, O Keshava."

his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved science at its disposal. As an element in the total complexity of human life, this stress on a perfected economic and material existence has its place in the whole: as a sole or predominant stress it is for humanity itself, for the evolution itself full of danger. The first danger is a resurgence of the old vital and material primitive barbarian in a civilised form; the means Science has put at our disposal eliminates the peril of the subversion and destruction of an effete civilisation by stronger primitive peoples; but it is the insurgence of the barbarian in ourselves, in civilised man that is the peril and this we see all around us. For that is bound to come if there is no high and strenuous mental and moral ideal controlling and uplifting the vital and physical man in us and no spiritual ideal liberating him from himself into his inner being. Even if this relapse is escaped there is another danger, —for a cessation of the evolutionary urge, a crystallisation into a stable comfortable mechanical social living without ideal or outlook is another possible outcome. Reason by itself cannot long maintain the race in its progress; it can do so only if it is a mediator between the life and body and something higher and greater within him: for it is the inner spiritual necessity, the push from what is there yet unrealised within him that maintains in him, once he has attained to mind, the evolutionary stress, the spiritual nisus. That renounced, he must either relapse and begin all over again or disappear like other forms of life before him as an evolutionary failure, through incapacity to maintain or to serve the evolutionary urge."

A.B.

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